DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 336 798 CS 507 592

TITLE	Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (74th, Boston, Massachusetts, August 7-10, 1991). Part XIII: Studies on Television.
INSTITUTION	Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication.
PUB DATE	Aug 91
NOTE	433p.; For other sections of these proceedings, see CS 507 580-596.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC18 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Adolescents; Ethics; Higher Education; Ideology; Interpersonal Relationship; *Mass Media Role; News Reporting; *Racial Bias; Risk; Secondary Education; Soap Operas; Television Research; *Television Viewing
IDENTIFIERS	Journalists; Local News; Media Coverage; Prime Time Television; *Television News

ABSTRACT

The Studies on Television section of the proceedings contains the following 16 papers: "Television and the Cultivation of Perceptions about Racial Integration" (Paul Delva and others); "Breaking the News: The Ideology of Television News" (Paul Belgrade); "Whittle's Channel One and CNN's Newsroom: A Systematic Pilot Study of Teen-Oriented News Content" (Kathleen L. Endres and others); "Television News and Entertainment Exposure, Educational Experiences, and College Students' Race-Related Beliefs: Material Factors and Symbolic Racism" (G. Blake Armstrong); "Television Reality and Experience in Constructing Social and Personal Estimates of Risk" (Michael A. Shapiro); "Adolescents' Interpretations of Male-Female Relationships in a Soap Opera" (Kim Walsh-Childers); "Television and Crime Coverage: A Comparison of the Attitudes of News Directors and Victim Advocates" (Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque); "Cultivation and Exposure to Television Following the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake" (John E. Newhagen and Marion Lewenstein); "Television and the Family: A Qualitative Study" (Charles Lewis); "Women Correspondents' Visibility on the Network Evening News" (Joe S. Foote); "Do Television Characters Reflect Reality? Analyses of Prime Time Characters" (Coral M. Ohl and Prudence C. Faxon); "Television News Consultants: Exploration of Their Effect on Content" (Betsey Peale and Mark Harmon); "Lying in Prime Time: Ethical Egoism in Situation Comedies" (Larry Z. Leslie); "Journalists' Perceptions of News Selection in Local Television: A Q-Methodology Study" (Dan Berkowitz); "Negativity and Visualization as Criteria for News Selection in Local Television Newscasts" (Stephen C. Coon and Eric Hing-Tat Tse); and "A Model of Job Satisfaction in Local Television Newsrooms" (Angela Powers and Stephen Lacy). (RS)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED336798

PROCEEDINGS OF THE 1991 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE
ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND
MASS COMMUNICATION (74th, Boston, MA, August 7-10, 1991).
Part XIII: Studies on Television.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Ferrell
Ervin
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)
☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
● Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

CS507592

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Television and the Cultivation of Perceptions about Racial Integration

Paul Delva
Don Pratt
Robert M. Ogles

Running Head: CULTIVATION AND RACIAL INTEGRATION

Paul Delva (B.A., Concordia University, Montreal, 1986) is a graduate student in the Department of Communication at Purdue University. Don Pratt (B.A., South Dakota State University, 1977) is a graduate student in the Department of Political Science at Purdue University. Robert M. Ogles (Ph.D., University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1987) is an assistant professor and Director of Graduate Studies in the Department of Communication at Purdue University. The authors thank Jeannine Cihonski, an undergraduate student in the Department of Communication at Purdue, for assistance with data analysis. Please address correspondence to Robert M. Ogles, Department of Communication, 1366 Heavilon Hall 306, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN 47907-1366 (317-494-3318).

Television and the Cultivation of Perceptions about Racial Integration

A cultivation analysis was conducted from data gathered by telephone in a community survey of Indianapolis. Two television viewing measures were correlated with perceptions of racial integration for three groups: African-Americans, Asians, and Hispanics. Seventh-order partial correlational analysis suggests a link between (a) total time spent viewing television and some specific perceptions relating to minority assimilation in American society and (b) frequent viewing of specific programming genres and perceptions of assimilation by specific minorities. Results of a factor analysis indicate that program genre viewing is not linked to generalized perceptions of minority assimilation, but instead is related to perceptions of assimilation by specific minority groups.

Television and the Cultivation of Perceptions about Racial Integration

The general framework of media cultivation (e.g., Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1986) has allowed researchers to study a wide range of relationships between exposure to media content and social perceptions. For example, scholars have assessed media exposure in terms of overall television-viewing amounts (e.g., Gerbner et al., 1986), numbers of violent acts depicted in specific television programs viewed regularly (e.g., Ogles & Sparks, 1989), television viewing divided into program genres (Ogles, 1987; Potter & Chang, 1990), and experimental manipulations of film content (e.g., Ogles & Hoffner, 1987). A few of the numerous perceptions about social reality linked to media exposure include the likelihood and fear of criminal victimization (Doob & MacDonald, 1979; Sparks & Ogles, 1990), the erosion of regional diversity (Morgan, 1986), and political orientations (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1982).

This paper reports the results of a cultivation analysis that examined relationships between television viewing and perceptions of racial assimilation in American society. Television viewing was measured in several different ways. In addition to total viewing amounts, types of television shows viewed regularly were also considered. The social perceptions of interest were of African-American, Hispanic, and Asian assimilation into American society.

Television as a Shaper of Attitudes

The power of televised symbolic content in the formation of social reality, and the role of television as the principal storyteller and mythmaker in contemporary society, lie at the heart of the cultivation hypothesis. "At its root, television is 'story,' and a society's stories give a coherent picture of what exists, what is important, what is related to what, and what is right" (Griffin, 1991, p. 301). As predicted by the cultivation hypothesis, the amount of television a person watches will be positively correlated with his or her adoption of views about reality that reflect those depicted in television content. Television, then, is an important contributor to the social realities constructed by viewers.

Central to media cultivation is television's distorted image of the "real" world, as defined by socioeconomic and other statistical measures. In this regard, the cultivation of social paranoia has received much attention. For example, the world of television is depicted as overly violent, with proportionally more violent acts on television than occur in society (Gerbner, Gross, Eleey, Jackson-Beeck, Jeffries-Fox, & Signorielli, 1977).

Another dimension of media cultivation involves "mainstreaming," the tendency for television to draw heavy viewers away from extreme positions on various social and political issues (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, & Signorielli, 1980). Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1984) found heavy television viewers, compared to light viewers, to be more likely to think of themselves as "moderate" politically, while Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, and Signorielli (1982) found a self-styled averaging of income differences among heavy viewers, who, more than light viewers, tended to label themselves "middle class." Gerbner et al. (1982) warned that such mainstreaming of economic orientations might blur class lines and deter the development of working-class consciousness.

While some scholars have examined viewers' attitudes about various racial and political issues, such as busing, as part of larger studies (e.g., Gerbner et al., 1982; Morgan, 1986), the relationships between television viewing and perceptions of racial integration have not often been investigated from a cultivation perspective. One recent study (Matabane, 1988) found support for the cultivation hypothesis: "heavy television viewers more frequently perceived that racial integration is more prevalent, that blacks and whites were more similar, and that blacks were more middle class" (p. 26). The present study adopts many of Matabane's methods and approaches, including her central hypothesis that heavy television viewers should perceive more racial integration than do light viewers.

Cultivation Analysis

Cultivation analysis typically entails measures of media content, in addition to measures of both exposure to media content and relevant social perceptions for a population of interest. In the present study, frequency of exposure to genres of television programming and time spent viewing television were correlated with perceptions of racial integration.

Content. Compared to the wealth of data available on the violent nature of television programming, the televised portrayals of minority groups, especially groups other than African-American, are not nearly as well documented. Nevertheless, several studies provide some description of the televised images. Poindexter and Stroman (1981) note that historically, African-Americans have been underrepresented in television portrayals. Since the 1950s, when there were literally no African-Americans on television save for those in stereotypical roles on shows such as Amos 'n' Andy, their numbers have increased, and their roles have changed.

Still, O'Kelly and Bloomquist (1976) found in the mid 1970s that only 4.9 percent of 2,309 characters examined were African-American, Asian, or American Indian, while these groups constituted 15 percent of the American population at that time. Baptista-Fernandez and Greenberg (1980) found that African-Americans on television were comparatively younger, leaner, funnier, and flashier than other characters. Economically, they were comparatively poorer, working in jobs below the top echelons, or jobless. There was an avoidance of their portrayal as villains (p. 19). These authors also reported that the distribution of African-American characters tended to be heavily skewed, with about half in "all-black" shows and the remainder spread across numerous other shows in token-like fashion.

As Matabane (1988) notes, televised images of African-American integration have increased since the 1970s. Content analyses of television programs conducted since the mid 1980s reveal television images that highlight and promote racial integration. While earlier content analyses (e.g., Baptista-Fernandez & Greenberg, 1980) showed African-Americans to be portrayed either in "all-black" contexts or as the sole character of color in an otherwise "all-white" context, more recent analyses indicate that the context of African-American characters is changing. The Cosby Show, 227, Frank's Place, Amen, and A Different World are programs cited by Matabane as examples of this shift toward a more integrated television depiction of race in America. "The Cosby Show, for example, epitomizes the Afro-American dream of full acceptance and assimilation into U.S. society" (p. 30).

Based on Metabane's (1988) comments and empirical generalizations drawn from previous cultivation analyses, we hypothesized a positive correlation between respondents' total television viewing time and their levels of perceived racial assimilation.

Generating hypotheses about relationships between each of the television genres and perceptions of racial integration is a less clear-cut endeavor. Studies by Hawkins and Pingree (1981), Ogles (1987), and Potter and Chang (1990) have questioned the assumption of uniform television messages across program types. Metabane (1988) has observed a shift in the content of situation comedy toward a more integrated depiction of race in America. Based on her observations, it seems reasonable to expect the viewing of situation comedies, compared to other genres, would be more strongly correlated with perceptions of racial assimilation.

Method

Random telephone interviews with residents of Indianapolis were conducted by three interviewers (two male, one female) between November 6-21, 1989. Four-digit numbers were randomly generated through a computer program. These numbers were then attached at random to the three-digit prefixes of the exchanges in the city to form random telephone numbers.

There were 619 calls attempted. Of these, 450 were not completed because of no answer, business addresses, lines that were out of service, or unassigned numbers. Three calls were terminated because the person answering the telephone was under 18 years of age and no older person was available to respond to the survey. Sixty-five persons refused to participate, but 101 calls were successfully completed for a success rate of 61 percent of potentially successful calls (success rate equals the number of calls completed divided by the number of calls completed plus the number of refusals).

Each respondent answered a total of 38 survey questions grouped into three categories: demographic information, including items used as control variables in partial correlation analysis; viewing measures, including television-genre viewing behavior and estimates of total time spent watching television; and items pertaining to racial integration.

Demographic information. The average age of the respondents was 44.8 years (the range was 18 to 90). Gender was inferred by the interviewers in all cases; there were 63 female respondents and 38 male respondents. Race was recorded by asking each respondent to describe him or herself as "American Indian" (5 respondents), "Asian" (no respondents), "Hispanic" (1 respondent), "black" (10 respondents), or "white" (85 respondents). Education level was recorded by asking respondents to state the highest level of schooling completed among five choices: "some high school" (5 respondents), "high school" (28 respondents), "some college" (34 respondents), "college" (23 respondents), and "some graduate school" (11 respondents). Socioeconomic status was determined by asking respondents to choose an income bracket that best described their total household income for the preceding year. The lowest income level category was "less than $10,000." There were five respondents in that category. Each succeeding category increased by $10,000: "$10,001-$20,000" (26 respondents), "$20,001-$30,000" (23 respondents), "$30,001-$40,000" (9 respondents), "$40,001-$50,000" (12 respondents), and "more than $50,000" (21 respondents). Five respondents refused to disclose their income. There were 64 respondents who subscribed to cable television, and 67 who owned a video cassette recorder.

Viewing measures. Respondents were asked to state the frequency with which they watched television in seven program genres: news and information programs, afternoon soap operas, situation comedies, talk shows and variety shows, sports programs, game shows, and evening drama. Respondents were asked to state the approximate frequency with which they watched the genre in question on a five-point scale ranging from "hardly ever" to "every day."

Respondents also were asked to estimate the number of hours they watched television on a typical weekday, the number of hours watched on a typical Saturday, and the number of hours watched on a typical Sunday. For each respondent, the answer to the first of these three questions was multiplied by five and added to the answers to the second and third questions to arrive at a number representing total estimated weekly viewing.

Racial integration items. Questions about racial integration were adapted from Matabane's (1988) study of television and African-American audiences. Respondents were asked to state the extent to which they agreed with 12 statements about racial integration. Agreement was registered by having respondents state their level of agreement on a 0 to 10 scale, with 0 denoting maximum disagreement and 10 denoting maximum agreement.

The 12 statements were: (1) Asians can easily fit into a mostly white neighborhood; (2) Asians can easily fit into a mostly white workplace; (3) blacks can easily fit into a mostly white neighborhood; (4) blacks can easily fit into a mostly white workplace; (5) Hispanics can easily fit into a mostly white neighborhood; (6) Hispanics can easily fit into a mostly white workplace; (7) Asians are no different from whites in the way they talk, dress, and socialize; (8) blacks are no different from whites in the way they talk, dress, and socialize; (9) Hispanics are no different from whites in the way they talk, dress, and socialize; (10) Asians and whites frequently socialize together; (11) blacks and whites frequently socialize together; and (12)

Hispanics and whites frequently socialize together.

Results and Discussion

Seventh-order partial correlation coefficients were first calculated between total time spent viewing television and the perceptions of racial assimilation measures. Age, education, income, gender, race, and cable and VCR ownership were statistically controlled. The same control variables were then used in calculating the seventh-order partial correlation coefficients between television genre viewing and perceptions of racial assimilation.

Overall time spent viewing television is shown to be correlated with two of the measures for perception of racial assimilation (see Table 1) Both of these measures involve Asian assimilation. Increased television viewing is negatively correlated with perceptions that Asians easily fit into mostly white neighborhoods, but positively correlated with perceptions that Asians are not fundamentally different from whites. The apparently selective nature of cultivation, as well as the negative relationship noted, does not support the hypothesis that total television viewing is positively correlated with perceptions of racial assimilation.

The partial correlations for each program genre with each measure of racial assimilation are shown in Table 2. Eleven coefficients are statistically significant, but it is difficult to discern an overall pattern in the results.

To develop a better perspective on how program genre is related to perceptions of racial assimilation, the perception measures were subjected to a principal-components factor analysis using varimax rotation. The analysis reveals three factors (see Table 3) which can be characterized as follows:

Factor 1 includes the items measuring respondents' perceptions of minority assimilation in "mostly-white neighborhoods" and "mostly-white workplaces". This factor could be summarized as reflecting respondents' perceptions that tangible discriminatory acts or practices exist in American society.

Factor 2 includes items measuring respondents' personal beliefs regarding inherent differences between whites and minorities. This factor differs from the others in that it reflects respondents' personal attitudes as opposed to assessments of societal practices.

Factor 3 includes items measuring respondents' perceptions of "socializing" between whites and minorities. This factor seems to involve an interpersonal element that distinguishes it from the more tangible discrimination tapped in Factor 1.

The television programming genres can now be considered in relation to the distinct factors underlying the measures of racial assimilation.

There are only five correlations between the genre viewing measures and the racial assimilation measures in factor 1, but three involve game shows. In other words, half of the correlations between game show viewing totals and respondents' perceptions of tangible discrimination in American society are significant. Each of these significant partial correlations is negative, indicating that as game show viewing increases, perception of tangible discrimination (or a lack of racial assimilation) increases.

Factor 2 includes three significant correlations between the genre viewing measures and racial assimilation items. Two of these involve talk show viewing totals, and both correlations are positive, which suggests that two of the three measures of respondents' beliefs that whites are not fundamentally different from minorities increase with talk show viewing.

There are also three significant partial correlations between the genre viewing measures and the assimilation items in Factor 3. Two of these involve frequency of viewing evening dramas. These negative correlations indicate less interpersonal interracial socializing is perceived as evening viewing time increases.

Although it was hypothesized that any relationship between genre and perception of assimilation would be positive, only three of the eleven significant partial correlations were positive. It was further hypothesized that the sitcom genre, compared to other genres, would be more strongly related to perceptions of racial assimilation. But the sitcom viewing measure was not significantly related to any of the twelve measures of racial assimilation perceptions.

Even though the specific hypotheses were not supported by the data, this analysis offers insight into the cultivation process: Rather than exhibiting a pervasive and uniform influence, television programming seems to be related to viewers' perceptions of racial assimilation in selective and varying ways.

Total television viewing time is correlated with only two of the twelve measures of perceived racial assimilation, but both measures involve perceptions of Asian assimilation. In other words, half of the measures tapping perceptions of Asian assimilation are significantly related to overall television viewing time. It should be noted that Bureau of Census statistics for Indiana lists the state's Black population at 8 percent of the total. The Hispanic population is 1.9 percent, and all other minorities, including Asians, constitute less than 1 percent of the total population. Future research might explore whether cultivation is more likely to affect racial perceptions regarding those minorities who are least populous in a respondent's environment.

When the underlying structure of the racial assimilation measures is considered, there is some evidence of contrasting cultivation across different factors. Specifically, the analysis indicates viewing time is positively related to perceptions that Asians do not fundamentally differ from whites, but negatively related to perceptions that Asians fit easily into mostly-white neighborhoods.

The relationship between genre viewing habits and perceptions of racial assimilation offer interesting possibilities for additional research. An empirical generalization derived from these data suggests that the type of television watched, not just the amount of television watched, is important in the formation of racial assimilation perceptions.

Future scholars might seek to explain some of the results of this analysis, namely: why game show viewing is related to more measures of racial assimilation perceptions than any other genre; why the hypothesized positive correlation between sitcom viewing and perceptions of racial assimilation was not supported in these data; why viewing news and information was not related to any of the racial perception measures; and why the only positive relationships regarding perceptions of racial assimilation involve the talk and sports genres.

In general, this analysis lends support to media cultivation by demonstrating that perceptions of real-world racial assimilation are related to television viewing. It also hints at the sometimes subtle differences between the viewing of television program genres and racial assimilation perceptions.

References

Baptista-Fernadez, P., & Greenberg, B. S. (1980). The context, characteristics and communication behaviors of blacks on television. In B. S. Greenberg (Ed.), *Life on television: Content analyses of U.S. television drama* (pp. 13-21). Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Doob, A. N., & MacDonald, G. E. (1979). Television viewing and the fear of victimization: Is the relationship causal? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *37*, 170-179.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Eleey, M. F., Jackson-Beeck, M., Jeffries-Fox, S., & Signorielli, N. (1977). Violence profile No. 8: The highlights. *Journal of Communication*, *27*, 171-180.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1980). The "mainstreaming" of America: Violence profile no. 11. *Journal of Communication*, *30*, 10-29.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1982). Charting the mainstream: Television's contribution to political orientations. *Journal of Communication*, *32*, 100-126.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1984). Political correlates of television viewing. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *48*, 283-300.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process. In J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), *Perspectives on edia ffects*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Signorielli, N., & Morgan, M. (1980). The "mainstreaming" of America: Violence profile No. 11. Journal of Communication, 30, 11-29.

Griffin, E. (1991). Cultivation theory of George Gerbner. In A first look at communication theory (pp. 301-309). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Hawkins, R. P., & Pingree, S. (1981). Uniform messages and habitual viewing: Unnecessary assumptions in social reality effects. Human Communication Research, 7(4), 291-301

Matabane, P. W. (1988). Television and the black audience: Cultivating moderate perspectives on racial integration. Journal of Communication, 38, 21-31.

Morgan, M. (1986). Television and the erosion of regional diversity. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 30, 123-139.

O'Kelly, C. G., & Bloomquist, L. E. (1976). Women and blacks on TV. Journal of Communication, 26, 179-192.

Ogles, R. M. (1987). Media-influenced estimates of crime victimization: Three empirical investigations of the cultivation hypothesis. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Ogles, R. M., & Hoffner, C. (1987). Film violence and perceptions of crime: The cultivation effect. In M. L. McLaughlin (Ed.), Communication yearbook 10, Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Ogles, R. M., & Sparks, G. G. (1989). Television violence and viewers' perceptions of criminal victimization. Mass Comm Review, 16, 2-11.

Poindexter, P. M., & Stroman, C. A. (1981). Blacks and television: A review of the research literature. Journal of Broadcasting, 25, 103-122.

Potter, W. J., & Chang, I. C. (1990). Television exposure measures and the cultivation hypothesis. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34, 313-333.

Slater, D., & Elliot, W. R. (1982). Television's influence on social reality. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 68, 69-79.

Sparks, G. G., & Ogles, R. M. (1990). The difference between fear of victimization and the probability of being victimized: Implications for cultivation. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34, 351-358.

Volgy, T., & Schwartz, J. E. (1980). TV entertainment programming and socio-political attitudes. Journalism Quarterly, 57, 150-154.

Table 1

Partial Correlations Between Total Time Spent Viewing Television and Perceptions of Racial Integration

	___ can easily fit into mostly white neighborhoods			___ can easily fit into mostly white workplaces			___ are no different from whites in the ways they talk, dress and socialize			___ and whites frequently socialize together		
	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Hispanic
Total time spent viewing	-.18*	-.07	-.04	-.14	-.06	-.08	.18*	.13	.01	.01	.04	.00

* p. < .05 (one-tailed)

Note: Seventh-order partial correlation coefficients controlled for age, education, income, sex, cable and VCR ownership, and whether respondents were white or non-white. Correlations are based on a minimum N of 86.

Table 2

Partial Correlations Between Program Genre Viewing Habits and Perceptions of Racial Integration

	___ can easily fit into mostly white neighborhoods			___ can easily fit into mostly white workplaces			___ are no different from whites in the ways they talk, dress and socialize			___ and whites frequently socialize together		
Program Genre	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Hispanic	Asian	Black	Hispanic
News	.12	.00	.03	.16	.12	.08	.13	.07	.10	-.06	-.08	-.02
Soap Operas	-.11	-.27**	.00	-.13	-.16	-.06	.04	.09	.00	-.10	-.10	-.17
Situation Comedies	.03	-.04	-.14	.03	-.01	-.15	.07	-.02	-.03	-.04	-.06	-.16
Talk Shows	-.09	-.16	-.08	-.11	-.19*	-.05	.23*	.18*	.11	-.08	-.16	-.17
Sports	-.13	.01	-.01	-.04	-.02	.02	.17	.10	.13	.09	.19*	.16
Game Shows	-.13	-.13	-.27**	-.11	-.19*	-.19*	-.01	.00	-.19*	-.08	-.07	-.12
Drama	.03	-.05	.00	-.02	.03	-.04	.12	.11	-.09	-.18*	-.13	-.20*

** p. < .01 (one-tailed), * p. < .05 (one-tailed)

Note: Seventh-order partial correlation coefficients controlled for age, education, income, sex, cable and VCR ownership, and whether respondents were white or non-white. Correlations are based on a minimum N of 86.

Table 3

Factor Loadings for Racial Perception Items

Racial Perception Items	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
Blacks ... workplaces	.85672	.08832	.10065
Asians ... neighborhoods	.83590	.14029	.15428
Asians ... workplaces	.82060	.20269	.19608
Hispanics ... workplaces	.78115	.23346	.17793
Blacks ... neighborhoods	.73897	.02711	.14721
Hispanics ... neighborhoods	.73537	.28651	.22164
Asians no different	.19661	.88915	.19163
Hispanics no different	.11061	.88855	.20534
Blacks no different	.22969	.81630	.07431
Asians ... frequently socialize	.23115	.20718	.87386
Hispanics ... frequently socialize	.20608	.20016	.86869
Blacks ... frequently socialize	.17846	.08051	.85924

Note: Principal-components factoring, varimax rotation.

Breaking the News:

The Ideology of Television News

by

Paul Belgrade

Department of English
Millersville University
Millersville, PA 17551
717/872-3229 Office
717/872/295-3150

A Paper Presented to the
Radio-Television Journalism Division
of the Association for Education in
Journalism and Mass Communication
at the 1991 national convention
in Boston, Massachusetts
August 8, 1991

Breaking the News:
The Ideology of Television News

To analyze the role of ideology in television news correctly, one must first differentiate between what Douglas Kellner terms the "mythical" form of ideology from the "rational" form of ideology.[1] The mythical form of ideology, according to Kellner, is conveyed more through cultural concepts that have not been systematized such as "virginity and chastity" and "individuality and solidarity."[2] The media critics David Eason and Robert Stam have focused mainly on this form of ideology.

The rational form of ideology is formal and systematic in that it corresponds to political and economic theories such as Marxism and Capitalism. The Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser and the Marxist media critic Stuart Hall have concentrated their attention on the transmission of this rational form of ideology within culture.[3] In this paper, I will discuss each of these forms as they are reflected through television news and also discuss how a synthesis of the mythical-rational forms may be codified by television news.

The news as it is presented on television is a form of traditional journalism, and all journalism, according to Eason, attempts to "organize experience by providing a particular perspective or frame for knowing the world."[4] Eason contended that journalism organizes the world through the "principles of similarity and contiguity . . . reflected in the tropes of metaphor and metonymy."[5] He defined metaphor as representing the similarity between terms from different cultural contexts. Metonymy, on the other hand, represented contiguity between terms within the same cultural context.[6]

Eason claimed that traditional journalism is metonymical. That is, journalism establishes a routine system for representing reality that claims to be an objective reporting of events that does not alter the nature of the events through its procedures. To go outside the metonymical system and analyze the procedures used to report events would be an admission by journalists that their reports are simply metaphors for reality. That admission would undermine the basic principle of traditional journalism "that the reports themselves are part of that which they signify."[7]

Thus, the traditional journalistic "story" is projected as an unmediated report from the natural world rather than a carefully constructed and edited narrative. To view the report as such a narrative would change it into a metaphoric representation of the specific perceptions, cultural values, and ideological beliefs of the journalists who created it.

The narrative force of television news transcends the narrative force of print journalism because of its technical similarity to film. In television news, the viewer can become like the spectator (described by Christian Metz) who is absent from the screen but still has great power over the events through the act of perception:

> At the cinema, it is always the other who is on the screen; as for me, I am there to look at him. I take no part in the perceived, on the contrary, I am all-

> perceiving. All perceiving as one says all-powerful (this is the famous gift of ubiquity the film makes its spectator).[8]

The metaphorical nature of this news is not so obvious as in film, however, because the actors in television news often break film tradition by addressing the viewer directly. Yet, Stam maintained, "Television news is a signifying practice with recognizable ordering procedures, an organized discourse rather than unmediated life."[9]

The false sense of realism combined with the intimacy and identification with the controlling anchorperson and correspondents heightens the viewers' identification with the narrative and instills in them a personal sense of power over the events the narrative represents. The viewers, often watching within the security of their homes, are presented a simplified, coherent version of events that, themselves, may have been hopelessly chaotic. Although the content of the various stories may have consisted primarily of mayhem and catastrophe, the viewers' overall impression is of a news show and a world that moves along in an orderly, predictable, efficient manner.[10]

The result may be, not that viewers become frustrated with the complexity of world problems, but that they demand instant and simplistic solutions to problems--problems that seem easily soluble both because of the way they are coded by television news and because of the viewers' secure and powerful position. The viewers' frustration may follow from the inability of leaders to produce such solutions. For example, the public's impatience with the Carter administration's inability to gain the release of the American hostages from Iran throughout all of 1980 may have been partially a result of news broadcasters' concentration on the elements in the crisis that fit most easily into short and simple dramatic narratives: the frightful spectacle of mobs of hooded Iranians screaming anti-American slogans, the pathos of the hostages' families, the poignant sight of yellow bows appearing neatly tied about suburban trees all across the country.

Raymond Williams compared American and British news programs and concluded that the American news shows emphasized the personalities of the anchors and correspondents far more than the British programs. In addition, the British separated editorial commentary from news reports much more strictly than the Americans.[11] To illustrate this point, we need only to examine the behavior of the CBS news anchor during the aforementioned Iranian hostage crisis. Walter Cronkite's comment at the end of most of the nightly newscasts he anchored during the crisis, identifying the number of days the hostages had been held captive, was an extraordinary example of the power of American commentators to inject themselves into their reports and to manipulate the political importance of events by varying the emphasis placed on them.

The Marxist media critics also have analyzed the metaphoric character of television news, but they have focused mainly on the relationship between the news and the society's economic and social class system. They have based their views, to some extent, on the work of Louis Althusser, the French Marxist philosopher and semiotician who wrote that the viewer's ideology is partially shaped through transactions with cultural agents.[12]

Stuart Hall, the British scholar and media critic, argued that the media, an important cultural agent, favors and helps keep in power the dominant Capitalist classes even in democratic societies that claim to have a free press. This state of affairs exists not through "manifest bias or distortion" on the part of the media but through a much subtler process "by means of which certain events get recurrently signified in particular ways."[13] Broadcasters work from a "limited ideological matrix or net."[14] By historical and cultural tradition, similar events are told and retold in similar ways. The result is the assumption among broadcasters that only certain interpretations are valid for certain events. Taken together, these individual interpretations create a broad-based ideology.

For example, trade union members appear on television news mainly when they are standing on a picket line during a strike. In addition, the news commentators' description of the strike itself invariably is limited to its monetary cost to the company or the British people. According to Hall, "The brief extract of this denoted foreground event is an enormously compressed item of information, rich in connotations."[15].

Hall also contended that this broad ideological bias is strengthened by a narrower set of ideological principles--the journalistic conventions concerning the relative importance of events that most news broadcasters accept.[16] Such conventions almost guarantee that reports about the same events will appear on all competing networks, will receive similar treatment and even be shown in similar order during the newscasts.

The fictive nature of the entire television news production process and the complicity of that process in communicating both forms of ideology becomes most obvious when one considers the menagerie of technicians (with gear), producers, and on-air talent that are normally present at every event the networks cover. This process becomes almost bizarre when one considers the lengths broadcasters go to ignore the role of these crews in the event itself. The following passage from a popular textbook for students pursuing careers in broadcast journalism illustrates the point:

> Television journalists must understand that people want to see real people, not reporters. Reporters are not real people. The person who is being interviewed is the real person.[17]

Stam moved beyond the arguments that news broadcasters reinforce their own cultural values as well as the existing socioeconomic order when he suggested that television news even contains "the kernel of utopian fantasy."[18] This element of fantasy is particularly evident on the local news where showmanship is so prevalent. The anchor crew jokes and laughs, pokes fun at the weather forecaster and becomes ludicrously solemn only during the predictable reports of fires, accidents and assaults.

Stam suggested that the network newscasts also strive to help their audiences feel content despite the content of the news. Viewers are spared the suggestion that they may be partially responsible for the sorry state of the world through their support of corrupt or incompetent leaders. Instead, viewers are provided with many humorous or sentimental human interest stories to keep them in a happy frame of mind.[19]

This aura of good-feeling and amiability absorbed by the viewer represents Stam's concept of utopian fantasy which could also provide the basis for a synthesis between the rational and mythical forms of ideology as they are expressed through television news. The network news producers' desire to please the audience and the phony good-fellowship of the local news team are both designed to raise ratings and, perhaps unconsciously, to provide a complacent customer for that crucial segment of the news show--the commercial. The commercial certainly can be seen as another news segment, no less important than any other segment. Stam argued that this importance is emphasized by the structure of news programs. The fact that "sponsors have the right to interrupt essential information . . . itself conveys a powerful ideological effect."[20]

Perhaps, the viewers' sense of power, control and security obtained form the "real" news stories makes the commercial's promise seem even more plausible. The news segments themselves may help to convince viewers that they really can become part of all that pleasure, beauty, romance, and relief from pain depicted in the commercials simply by laying their money down. In this sense, then, the Capitalistic ideology of consumption becomes the lead story, and the news, itself, becomes the commercial for Commerce.

[1] Douglas Kellner, "TV, Ideology, and Emancipatory Popular Culture," in Television: The Critical View, ed. by Horace Newcomb (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), p. 388.

[2] Ibid., p. 388

[3] Ibid., p. 387

[4] David L. Eason, "New Journalism, Metaphor and Culture," Journal of Popular Culture, 15 (Spring, 1982), 143.

[5] Ibid.

[6] Ibid., p. 144

[7] Ibid., p. 145

[8] Christian Metz, The Imaginary Signifier, trans. by Celia Britton, et. al. (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1982), p.51.

[9] Robert Stam, "Television News and its Spectator," in Regarding Television, ed. by E. Ann Kaplan, The American Film Institute Monograph Series, Vol. 2 (Frederick, Maryland: University Publications of America, 1983) p 32.

[10] Ibid., p. 33

[11] Raymond Williams, Television: Technology and Cultural Form (New York: Schocken Books, 1975),p.47.

[12] Richard D. Yoakam and Charles F. Cremer, Eng: Television News and the New Technology (New York: Random House, 1985), p. 123.

[13] Kaja Silverman, The Subject of Semiotics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 48-49.

[14] Stuart Hall, "The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies," in Culture, Society, and the Media, ed. by Michael Gurevitch, et. al. (London: Mathuen, 1982) p. 69.

[15] Ibid., p. 72

[16] Stuart Hall, "Media Power: The Double Bind," Journal of Communications, 24, (Autumn, 1974), 24.

[17] Ibid., p.21

[18] Stam, p. 30

[19] Ibid., p. 27

[20] Ibid., p. 36

Whittle's Channel One and CNN's Newsroom:

A Systematic Pilot Study of Teen-Oriented News Content

Kathleen L. Endres
Department of Communication
University of Akron

Fred F. Endres
School of Journalism and Mass Communications
Kent State University

Thomas Miles
Department of Communication
University of Akron

A paper delivered to the Secondary Education Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, August 1991.

Whittle's Channel One and CNN's Newsroom:
A Systematic Pilot Study of Teen-Oriented News Content

Abstract

A systematic content analysis of two months of Channel One and Newsroom's news content was conducted. Major findings were that both programs present substantive blocks of time to important current topics. Channel One seems to reach out more to teens through its use of young, casual, culturally diverse anchors and reporters; more stories devoted to entertainment; and a greater use of teens as story sources and focal points. There appear to be fundamental differences in program philosophy and structure between Whittle and CNN.

Whittle's Channel One and CNN's Newsroom:

A Systematic Pilot Study of Teen-Oriented News Content

January 1990 represented not only the beginning of a new decade, but also a new, and controversial, period in secondary education classroom communication. The electronic delivery of news had arrived.

In late 1989, Turner's Cable News Network (CNN) had begun offering schools a 15-minute daily news program called Newsroom. In March 1990 another corporation, Whittle Communications, began offering a far more controversial news program to middle and high schools across the country.

Both have been successful. As of March 1991, Whittle claimed contracts with about 6,000 schools and CNN claimed it was being shown in almost 18,000 schools across the country (Interviews, CNN & Whittle spokespersons, March 5, 1991).

Channel One is a 12-minute broadcast. While controversial in several respects, one of the major complaints from parents, educators and administrators was the inclusion of two minutes of commercials. Whittle's arrangement was simple. In exchange for entering a three-year contract to show the daily newscasts, each school received $50,000 in electronic equipment, including a video satellite dish, a VCR, and dozens of color television sets. CNN's Newsroom contains no commercials and, thus far, has escaped major criticism.

Whittle, on the other hand, has taken the brunt of the public and educational criticism for three reasons: the advertising component of Channel One, the financial carrot dangled in front of financially strapped school systems, and the tight focusing on the secondary student audience in a captive setting. Whittle calls this controversial approach "place-based television" (Lail, 1990, p. 24).

Unfortunately, that's where the attention has remained. The ethics of the arrangement have been hashed out in parent-teacher meetings from coast to coast, in school board meetings, and in publications of every sort.

Lost in the controversy has been any substantive, systematic examination of the news content of not only Whittle's Channel One, but also CNN's Newsroom. So much attention has been paid to other issues that researchers really don't know much about the news content of the two programs.

This pilot study attempts to correct that oversight, to get beyond the "advertising debate," so to speak. It is the first of a three-part investigation now underway into the use of this essentially non-traditional medium in the classroom.[1]

The systematic analysis of the news and feature content of Channel One and Newsroom should be useful for several reasons. Although the debate over advertising will not be solved, a better picture of the kinds of information being delivered (and, perhaps, consumed) will be produced. That may help educators and administrators make more informed judgments about whether they wish to have one of the programs shown to their students. Parents also may be able to make some judgments about the benefits of such programming for their children. And, teachers and researchers in journalism and mass communication may gain insight into the content and approach of the new medium.

Combining the visual power of television with the highly segmented focus of magazines, and using the technology of cable and satellite transmission to reach student audiences in captive habitats, these programs may have ramifications not yet fully comprehended. This first step, a systematic content analysis of the programming, may give several disparate groups better insight into the situation.

Literature Review

The available literature on in-school broadcast news programs is limited in two ways. First, because of the relative newness of the ventures, little scholarly work has been produced. Second, because of the controversy generated over Whittle's approach to marketing the program and the inclusion of advertising, the extensive popular literature extant has focused almost exclusively on those aspects of the programs. There has been almost no attention--scholarly or popular--to the news content of both the programs. It has been overshadowed by the controversies surrounding Whittle.

Articles on the commercial nature of Channel One have appeared in publications ranging from Washington Journalism Review to The School Administrator to School Library Journal to The New Republic. Two themes have dominated these articles. The first is that secondary schools are being economically blackmailed to enter into a contract with Whittle by the offer of expensive equipment. School systems are buying into a Trojan Horse, critics have claimed. The second dispute is over whether students--in the school environment--should be exposed to commercials and the possible effects of that exposure. Among the critics--and proponents--have been Graves (1990), Rudinow (1989-1990), Rukeyser (1989-1990), Rist (1989), Cheatham & Cohen (1989), Gosewisch (1989), Daly (1990), and an anonymous author in The New Republic (1989).

Some general comments have been made about Channel One's content and style, based largely on pilot programs aired in early 1989. Newman (1989), writing in The New Republic, notes that Channel One has been described as a cross between MTV and Good Morning America. He continues, "Its news stories are narrated by young, attractive, stylishly groomed anchors who look as if they don't quite understand themselves what they're talking about....The lead stories last about 20 seconds and are subdivided into lots of fleeting visual fragments" (Newman, 1989, p. 13).

Scholarly research is not extensive. Wulfemeyer and Mueller (1990) conducted a research project on Channel One, but their focus was on the advertising content of the program. They did note that "Few people have complained about the news content...." Non-advertising content consisted of "mostly short" national and international news and features, with stories similar to those broadcast by local and network news departments. Channel One also provided "longer-format feature reports and series segments dealing with such topics as life in the Soviet Union and environmental awareness," according to Wulfemeyer and Mueller. They describe the news portion of the early pilot programs thusly:

> The fast-paced program was hosted by young, attractive news readers. All the news and feature reporters were young, too. State-of-the-art graphics were used to enhance the visual impact of stories and eye-catching "fast facts" and "pop quizzes" were used to heighten interest."

Sneed, et. al. (1989) noted that Channel One might offer a "possible means" to help spread media studies across social sciences in high schools. Proponents of the program, they said, "feel the programming provides an excellent opportunity for high school social science teachers to encourage students to become critical consumers of the mass media." The only comments the authors made on the content of the program were based on early 1989 pilot programs. They called it "fast-paced, glitzy."

And, Haney (1989), in a review and analysis of the early Channel One and Newsroom programs and the controversies surrounding them, examined several components of what he called "electronic curricular supplements." One of those components was a brief summary of their content and format. He called Channel One "a fast-paced, high energy show with young hosts and reporters." Anchors and reporters "dressed casually and could easily pass for VJ's [video jockeys] on MTV," he continued.

CNN's Newsroom was very different in look and content, he said. "The news is delivered by many of CNN's regular reporters. Two anchors and two correspondents who do stories for a student audience certainly make their mark on the show....The stories...are longer than those on Channel One and they appear to be less flashy" (Haney, 1989).

Sneed and Haney both note that changes were made in the formats of both programs after their phase-in periods.

Research Questions

Out of the literature, the criticisms of the early programs and the goals of the authors, the following research questions were addressed.

What were the topics of the stories broadcast, the time allotted to them and their placement?

How did the two programs compare in topic selection, time allotment and story placement?

What types of stories did Channel One and Newsroom carry, i.e., news, feature, departmental?

What were the social and racial/ethnic characteristics of the programs' anchors and main reporters? How did they appear in terms of age, dress, etc.?

How extensively were programs' stories related to a teenage audience? Specifically, to what extent were teens mentioned in stories or used as sources in stories?

Method

The authors conducted a systematic content analysis of both Channel One and Newsroom news programming over a two-month period. (A pre-test of both programs had been conducted in November 1990.) The consecutive months of January and February 1991 were selected in November 1990 and arrangements made to have the programs taped. Out of a total of 43 news broadcasts for each program (and allowing for technical difficulties in taping several broadcasts) 37 matching dates were available.

The advance planning necessary to obtain tapes of the programs may have led to some distortion of results.[2] The outbreak of the Persian Gulf war in mid-January meant both programs almost always devoted their lead stories to that major international story. Still, there were several aspects to war coverage the programs could have chosen to emphasize, and the authors, thus, decided to stay with that time frame selection. Both programs also carried stories devoted to non-war topics.

The purposively selected sample frame was all Monday through Friday broadcasts of Channel One and Newsroom from January 2 to February 28, 1991. The unit of analysis was each story broadcast on Newsroom and Channel One. A "story" operationally was defined as a section of a news program dealing with a specific topic. Stories also were coded by who reported them, i.e., an anchor or a reporter (Lichty & Bailey, 1978). Types of stories were news, features and departments. (Promos for upcoming stories, short "flashback" stories, and quizzes were not included in the coding.) A total of 430 stories were coded, 212 for Channel One and 218 for Newsroom.[3]

To address the research questions, these components of the programs were coded: story topics, types of stories, length of stories, position of story in newscast, whether teenagers were interviewed in the story, whether teenagers were mentioned in the story, and gender and racial characteristics of program anchors and reporters. Information also was recorded on whether the story also was reported on the competing program and, if so, in what position.

Story content categories, or classifications, covered a wide range of possibilities and were coded by general topic, specific subject matter, and geographic origination. Two examples are: War-Military Activity-Persian Gulf; or Economic-Savings & Loan Bailout-New York State.[4] As Wimmer & Dominick (1991, 165-167) and other researchers note, categories were mutually exclusive, exhaustive and (based on an inter-coder reliability test), reliable. General categories and time allotment groupings were drawn from several studies, including Lindlof & Canning (1980); Reese, Daly & Hardy (1987); Paraschos & Rutherford (1985); Randall (1987); Dominick (1981); Greenberg & Wartenberg (1990); and Gerbner & Gross (1976).

An inter-coder reliability test (North, Holsti, Zaninovich & Zinnes, 1963, p. 49) was conducted on a random sample of the broadcasts with a resulting .96 score.[5] The high reliability score was not surprising because the vast majority of coding categories were, as Lichty and Baily (1978, p. 119) call them, "non judgmental," i.e., there were no attempts to gauge fairness and bias.

One independent variable, Teen Involvement, was constructed to help discover how much the stories might relate to adolescent audiences. As noted above, the authors coded whether teenagers were used as sources for stories and whether teenagers were mentioned in the stories. Teen Involvement is an additive of those two variables.

This system was used: If teenagers were used as sources, one point was allotted. If teenagers were mentioned in the story, the following point allocation system was used: 2 points if the story revolved around teenagers, 1 point if teenagers were just mentioned in passing, and 0 points if teenagers were not mentioned in the story. For any given story, the highest number of points that could be given was 3 and the lowest 0. Each story received a score and a scale was produced by summing the scores across stories and taking the mean of all non-missing cases. The mean frequencies were divided roughly into thirds and grouped into the categories of No Teen Involvement, Some Teen Involvement, and High Teen Involvement.

Teen Involvement is not a salience variable; other factors enter into that issue. It is an exploratory variable, attempting to gain some insight into the extent to which the programs involve teenagers as they attempt to target a teen audience.

Results

Research Question 1: Stories and Time Allotment

The average number of stories carried by the two programs was about 6, with a range of 3 to 8. As noted, there were so few instances in which either program carried an eighth story that only the first seven were included in analyses.

Table 1 about here

After grouping the stories by topic, a fairly clear picture of program content emerged. Unsurprisingly, the Gulf War dominated newscasts on both programs for both months studied. As Table 1 shows, overall about 41% of the stories were related to the war. Another 12% was devoted to U.S. reaction to the war. And, as Table 2 indicates, the Gulf War was the top story, on average, in 5 of the 7 stories coded. U.S. reaction to the war was the second played story, on average, in 4 of the 7 stories.

After the war stories, the overall focus shifted to U.S. entertainment, economic, science, government, and education topics. No real patterns emerged after that.

And, in individual stories by topics (Table 2), overall, U.S. entertainment, education, and cultural diversity issues began moving higher into the broadcasts.

Table 2 about here

Time allotted to topics followed a somewhat different pattern; the programs devoted the largest amount of time, overall, to the war and American reaction. In terms of time, however, stories on U.S. education and government both received play almost as long as those on the war. (See Table 3.)

Research Question 2: Program Comparisons on Topics/Time/Placement

Table 1 gives the clearest indication of the differences between topics attended to by Channel One and Newsroom.

Overall, the Whittle program devoted about 32% of its coverage to the war, while the CNN program gave 50% of its coverage to the conflict. Both programs devoted about 11 to 13% to U.S. reaction to the war.

After the war stories, Channel One tended to focus on U.S. entertainment, economic, and science news, while Newsroom paid more attention to U.S. government news, education, and cultural diversity problems.

When the data are examined by individual story (see Table 2), other important differences appear. For example, while both played the Gulf War very heavily in their lead stories (86.5% for Channel One and 73% for Newsroom), Channel One gave appreciably less attention to it in its subsequent stories, while Newsroom gave it strong coverage in the second, third, and fourth stories as well.

Indeed, 65% of Newsroom's second stories were on the war, compared to 35% for Channel One. Some 60% of Newsroom's third stories were on the war, compared to 11% for Channel One. In Story 6, Channel One gave about a third of its coverage to the U.S. entertainment and sports scenes, compared to only 17% for Newsroom. On the other hand, in Story 7, Newsroom devoted 36% of its coverage to cultural diversity problems; Channel One carried no stories on that topic in the seventh spot.

In terms of time allotment, the programs devoted an appreciable amount of time to the war and U.S. reaction. Channel One stories on the war averaged about 139 seconds in length, Newsroom's about 125. Channel One's stories on American reaction averaged 142 seconds, Newsroom's 111.[6]

Table 3 about here

As Table 3 shows, after that, Newsroom stories (compared to Channel One's) were longer on average on almost all other topics, including U.S. economic, scientific, entertainment, government, and cultural diversity. (Newsroom, however, did have five more minutes daily than Channel One.)

The authors also were interested in how the story topics on the two programs were played compared to each other. The results were startling and may say something important about the philosophies of the programs and the way they were conceptualized.

For example, 36 of the 37 story topics played as the lead story on Channel One also were played in the top three stories of Newsroom on a given day, a fairly consistent phenomenon, and one that indicates that both programs considered the topic (in most, but not all cases, the war) to be highly important.

After that, however, the story topic play by the programs differed markedly. For example, 29 of the 37 story topics played in the second position by Channel One were not covered at all by Newsroom; 31 of the 37 story topics played in the third position by Channel One were not broadcast by Newsroom. A similar pattern existed for stories 4 through 7: Story 4--33 of 36 not covered; Story 5--31 of 33 not covered; Story 6--26 of 27 not covered; and, Story 7--4 of 4 not covered.

Research Question 3: Types of Stories Broadcast

Both Channel One and Newsroom are news programs. Each offered virtually identical numbers of news and feature stories. In both programs, news stories predominated (Newsroom=137 or 63%; Channel One=139 or 66%). The remainder of the total was split among features and features within weekly, topic-of-the-week departments. In this paper, departmental features were combined with general feature stories.

Features were more likely to be found later in the broadcast. On Channel One, the largest number of features were broadcast as the fifth or sixth story. On Newsroom, they most frequently were found as the fourth or fifth story.

Research Question 4: Anchors and Reporters

Channel One and Newsroom took distinctly different approaches to using their anchors, the individuals who introduce each program. Newsroom has opted for continuity (as do network news programs) while Channel One has gone for variety.

Newsroom took a "team" anchor approach. Each program was introduced by anchors Cassandra Henderson, an African-American woman, and Brian Todd, a white male. Besides greeting the viewer at the top of the broadcast, this pair also did all the lead-ins for the various stories broadcast. They sometimes also reported stories.

In contrast, the role of the anchor(s) on Channel One was far more limited. The anchor greeted the viewer and immediately reported the first story. The anchors did not perform a "continuity" function. They typically did not provide lead-ins for other reporters. Each reporter normally introduced his or her own story.

At Channel One, three reporters rotated in the anchor spot: Mark Carter, an African-American male, who introduced 17 of the 37 broadcasts monitored; Kathy Kronenberg, a white female, who opened 10 shows; and Michelle Ruiz, an Hispanic woman, who opened six. In four instances, a couple (two of the anchors already identified) introduced the Channel One broadcast. Thus, Channel One provided a slightly more varied social and racial/ethnic base in its anchors.

Table 4 about here

The contrast between Channel One and Newsroom was even more striking in the social and racial/ethnic characteristics of reporters. As Table 4 shows, the majority of the stories on Newsroom were reported by white males (N=89 or 63%, compared to N=8 or 4% for Channel One). Whether it be the lead story or the fifth, it was likely to be reported by a white male on Newsroom.

In contrast, Channel One was far more likely to broadcast stories reported by a minority. In a reversal of the findings of Newsroom, the largest number of Channel One stories were reported by Carter, an African-American male. Only three stories were reported by a minority male on Newsroom and each of these occupied either the sixth or seventh position in the broadcast.

Women reporters also figured prominently in the Channel One broadcasts. A white female (Kronenberg) reported 75 stories; an Hispanic woman (Ruiz) covered 37 stories.

On both Channel One and Newsroom, men were more likely to report news than features. On Channel One, Carter, the dominant male personality, reported 64 news stories but only 16 features. The eight stories covered by white males on the Channel One programs included one news story and seven features. On Newsroom, white males reported 54 news stories while the remainder reported 35 features.

The situation was more complex regarding women on both programs. They handled a larger portion of the features than men. On Newsroom, white female reporters covered the same number of news and feature stories (11 each); minority women handled slightly more news (15) than features (13). At Channel One, women handled more feature stories than the men; but, they also covered a larger share of the news stories than was the case for women on Newsroom. Kronenberg, for example, covered 45 news stories to 30 features; Ruiz reported 23 news stories and 14 features. Thus, at Channel One during the time period studied, women covered more news stories, while on Newsroom for the same time period, women were more likely to be covering features. Newsroom minorities (male and female) were more likely to cover features (16) than news (15 and all were reported by women).

Although reporters and anchors' dress was not coded systematically, some distinct impressions are evident. Channel One reporters looked, dressed and acted younger than their Newsroom counterparts. The Channel One reporters are young--in their twenties. The dress on Channel One broadcasts was casual. Carter did not wear a tie and seldom donned a sportcoat. Typically, he appeared in slacks and a sweater. Kronenberg sported a similar casual look. She was sometimes even shown covering stories wearing jeans. One of her trademarks was long, dangling earrings popular among teenage girls. Ruiz' wardrobe included skirts and dress trousers and blouses.

Ruiz, Kronenberg, Carter and the other Channel One reporters seemed to try to cultivate an association with their teen viewers. In introducing a segment on editorial cartoons, for example, Ruiz explained, "We've all grown up with cartoons...." Kronenberg was filmed at a teen rock concert for a story on hearing loss (Channel One broadcasts, February 12, 1991 and January 8, 1991, respectively).

That type of cultivation generally was missing from Newsroom. Most of the reporters were the same as seen on CNN's regular news broadcasts: Peter Arnett in Baghdad, Steve Hurst in Moscow or Norma Quarles in New York. Newsroom anchors Cassandra Henderson and Brian Todd are younger than most CNN reporters. (Newsroom had added three younger reporters as of March 1991.) However, neither anchors nor appeared to be trying to cultivate a teen audience via their wardrobes or comments. Todd typically was in coat and tie. Henderson's dress was professional, almost elegant.

They seldom made comments designed to associate themselves with their teen viewers. In one instance, Henderson did appear to try to reach out by noting, "Try to imagine what it's like for people like you who live in Baghdad," in her introduction to a Peter Arnett story. However, no teens were pictured or interviewed in that report (Newsroom broadcast, February 4, 1991). The reporters appeared to be, in essence, removed from the audience by age, dress and demeanor.

Research Question 5: Teen Involvement

Because the programs are aimed at teen audiences, the degree to which teenagers are involved in the news stories is important. Involvement was determined by the extent to which teenagers were used as story sources, the degree to which a story focused on teenagers, and, through the constructed variable Teen Involvement.

Table 5 about here

As Table 5 shows, overall, teenagers were not used as story sources very often. Overall, Channel One used them as sources in about 16% of the coded stories and Newsroom used them as sources in about 6% of the stories. Channel One used teenagers as sources in 44% of the stories played sixth, and Newsroom used teens as sources in 13% of the stories played sixth. Those were the highest percentages for both programs.

Overall, as Table 5 also shows, a somewhat higher proportion of stories focused on teenagers to one degree or another. Channel One's overall average was about 26% and Newsroom's about 8%. Channel One was around 50% for stories played fifth, sixth and seventh; Newsroom reached its peak, 19.5%, in the stories it played fourth.

The variable, Teen Involvement, showed similar programmatic differences. Overall, Channel One had no Teen Involvement in 13.5% of its programs, some involvement in 40.5%, and high involvement in 46%. Newsroom had no Teen Involvement in almost 57% of its programs, some involvement in about 32%, and high involvement in about 11% (x^2=18.22, df=2, p<.001).

Most of Channel One and Newsroom's Teen Involvement came in stories played fourth, fifth and sixth, obviously following the patterns of the variables from which it was constructed. Even here, however, Channel One had a statistically significant higher Teen Involvement in Stories 2, 5 and 6 (Story 2: $t=2.03, df=54.7, p<.05$; Story 5: $t=4.36, df=48.8, p<.001$; Story 6: $t=2.43, df=48, p<.02$).

All three measures were strongly affected by type of story involved. Both programs tended to broadcast features after the first two or three news stories. And, it was in these features that teens as sources and as focal points began to show up.

Using the constructed Teen Involvement variable, for example, in 66 Channel One features, teens were involved--to one degree or another--45 times (68%). In 76 Newsroom features, teens were involved 14 times (18%). Conversely, in 138 Channel One news stories, teens were involved only 11 times (8%), and in 137 Newsroom news stories, teens were involved to some extent only 5 times (3.6%). Teen Involvement, controlling for program, was statistically significant for both programs (Channel One: $x^2=93.06, df=3, p<.001$; Newsroom: $x^2=13.82, df=3, p<.01$).

Table 6 about here

Teen Involvement also was examined by general story topic. Stories were collapsed into nine major subject categories and the constructed Teen Involvement variable was crosstabulated with each subject. As Table 6 indicates, in all subject categories but one, Channel One had some level of Teen Involvement. On Newsroom, however, only four of the nine topic categories showed some level of Teen Involvement.

Both programs involved teenagers heavily in stories about education, and, to a lesser degree, in stories on entertainment and culture. On the other hand, only Channel One exhibited some degree of Teen Involvement on stories dealing with government, economics, social problems and science.

Discussion

There are several important findings in this study.

First, it appears that much of the criticism of the early Channel One pilot programs no longer is warranted. While Channel One, especially, may still use lots of flashy graphics, the news content is more substantive and greater blocks of time are allotted to the news and features.

Indeed, both programs deliver a wide variety of news and feature topics to their teenage audiences. Although the Gulf War, appropriately, was given a great deal of play, other topics of national and international importance were attended to. (The global importance of the Gulf War apparently did not have an effect on the length of stories. Story lengths in November 1990 pre-tests still were in the 90-180 second range.)

Both programs give time to topics that should naturally interest teenagers, i.e., entertainment/sports and education. But the programs are not clones of each other, particularly when one considers that most specific stories, excluding war coverage, were not duplicated on the other program. CNN spends more time on most topics, has about the same number of stories per broadcast as Channel One, but also had five more minutes available.

Second, Channel One seems to be making a greater effort than Newsroom to reach out to teenagers. That is especially true in two areas. The first is in the personal characteristics of its anchors and reporters. They are young people who dress casually and seem to make some effort to relate to their audience. Channel One also has a much greater cultural diversity with more women and minorities than Newsroom. On the other hand, women on both programs seem to be assigned more to features than to hard news.

The second is in the use of teens as story sources and as focal points for stories. Channel One had higher overall Teen Involvement scores. It seems to be making an effort to seek out teens as sources and, especially, to focus its stories on teenagers. Channel One used teens as sources 16% of the time compared to 6% for Newsroom.

And, Channel One used teens as the focal points of stories an average of 26% of the time, compared to 8% for Newsroom.

Channel One also used teens in almost all general topic categories: military, government, economics, science and entertainment. Newsroom involved them primarily, and minimally, in stories dealing with entertainment and culture.

Third, all of this may be related to what is perhaps the most interesting and important finding of this project. That deals with the philosophy behind the programs and the way they have been conceptualized and crafted.

Whittle's Channel One--its commercial aspects and marketing approach aside--was established for a teen audience. Whittle started from the bottom and worked up. There was no Channel One already in existence; it had to be created. And, in creating it, Whittle apparently made several fundamental decisions. First, it used young, informal, and culturally diverse anchors and reporters. Second, it reported stories that ostensibly would interest teenagers. And, third, it used teens as sources for the stories and as focal points for many of the stories.

CNN, on the other hand, started with an established (and successful) framework already in place. As the major cable purveyor of around-the-clock news, CNN had at its disposal dozens of reporters around the world. It appears to have made a decision to add young anchors, but leave the rest of the traditional CNN news team and package in place. The people, mostly white males, who report for Newsroom are the same ones reporting on CNN's regular news reports.

These are interesting differences in basic programming structure and philosophy.

Whether any of the differences, or similarities, reported here have any bearing on whether teenagers in secondary schools are watching the programs, let alone learning from them, is unknown at this point. Whether teachers are utilizing the availability of the two programs also is largely undetermined. Those are questions to be answered in follow-up research projects.

What is clear, however, is that both programs--and, especially Whittle's Channel One--are attempting to deliver substantive current events information to an audience not known for its use of the news media or for its knowledge of current or geographical affairs (Finn, 1989; Rosentiel, 1990). Perhaps Sneed, et. al. (1989) are correct that these programs offer schools an opportunity to bring both current affairs knowledge--and mass media usage--into the lives of American teenagers.

The results of this project demonstrate that the information is being made available. Unfortunately, the approach Whittle has taken to marketing and advertising continues to get in the way of substantive discussion of the potentially positive contributions these programs could make. If this paper contributes anything to the public discussion, hopefully it will help educators and parents look beyond the commercial criticisms and address the substantive question of students' lack of knowledge and the availability of programs that can and do provide that information.

Table 1

Story Topics Broadcast, Overall and by Program

Topic	Program					
	Number	Pct. of all Stories				
	Overall		Channel One		Newsroom	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Persian Gulf War	176	40.9%	67	31.6%	109	50.0%
U.S. War Reaction	51	11.9	23	10.8	28	12.8
U.S. Entertainment	23	5.3	17	8.0	6	2.8
U.S. Economic News	20	4.7	15	7.7	5	2.3
U.S. Science	20	4.7	15	7.1	5	2.3
U.S. Govt Actions	19	4.4	9	4.2	10	4.6
U.S. Education	15	3.5	5	2.4	10	4.6
Baltic War	14	3.5	11	5.2	3	1.4
Non-U.S. Science	10	2.3	4	1.8	6	2.3
U.S. Cultural Probs.	10	2.3	0	0.0	10	4.6
Oth Non-U.S. Military	8	1.9	7	3.3	1	0.5
E. European Govt.	7	1.6	1	0.5	6	2.8
U.S. Social Probs.	7	1.6	5	2.4	2	0.9
Non-U.S. Cultural Prob	7	1.6	4	1.9	3	1.4
U.S. Other	6	1.4	5	2.4	1	0.5
USSR Government	5	1.2	5	2.4	0	0.0
S. Africa War	4	0.9	4	1.9	0	0.0
S. Africa Rights	4	0.9	3	1.4	1	0.5
Non-U.S. Education	4	0.9	2	0.9	2	0.9
S. American Govt.	3	0.7	1	0.5	2	0.9
Asian Rights	3	0.7	3	1.4	0	0.0
U.S. Rights	2	0.5	0	0.0	2	0.9
E. Europe Economic	2	0.5	0	0.0	2	0.9
Non-U.S. Entertainment	2	0.5	2	0.9	0	0.0
USSR Economic	1	0.2	1	0.5	0	0.0
Mideast Government	1	0.2	1	0.5	0	0.0
Non-U.S. Other	1	0.2	1	0.5	0	0.0
Asian Economic	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.5
Asian Government	1	0.2	0	0.0	1	0.5
		100%*		100%*		100%*

*Percentage totals may not equal 100 because of rounding.

Table 2

Top Three Topics Broadcast Overall and Their Play by Program*

	Overall		Channel One	Newsroom
Story	Topic	Pct.		
Story 1	Gulf War	79.7%	86.5%	73.0%
	U.S. Government Actions	6.8%	5.4	8.1
	U.S. Reaction to war	4.1%	0.0	8.1
Story 2	Gulf War	50.0%	35.1	64.9
	U.S. Reaction to war	13.5%	13.5	13.5
	U.S. Economic News	5.4%	10.8	0.0
Story 3	Gulf War	35.1%	10.8	59.5
	U.S. Reaction to war	10.9%	16.2	5.4
	U.S. Social Problems	5.4%	8.1	2.7
	U.S. Science/Environment	5.4%	10.8	0.0
Story 4	Gulf War	16.4%	11.1	21.6
	U.S. Reaction to war	16.4%	11.1	21.6
	U.S. Science/Environment	9.6%	16.7	2.7
Story 5	Gulf War	50.0%	35.1	64.9
	U.S. Reaction to war	13.5%	13.5	13.5
	U.S. Economic news	5.4%	10.8	0.0
	Non-U.S. Science/Environment	5.4%	2.7	8.1
Story 6	U.S. Entertainment	26.0%	33.3	17.4
	U.S. Reaction to War	14.0%	11.1	17.4
	U.S. Education	12.0%	11.1	13.0
	U.S. Cultural Diversity	10.0%	0.0	21.7
Story 7	U.S. Cultural Diversity	26.7%	0.0	36.4
	Gulf War	20.0%	0.0	27.3
	U.S. Education	13.3%	0.0	18.2
	U.S. Entertainment	13.3%	50.0	0.0
	U.S. Reaction to War	13.3%	25.0	9.1

*There were 74 total stories for Story 1, Story 2, Story 3, and Story 5. There were 73 total stories for Story 4, 50 for Story 6, and 15 for Story 7; the totals for Stories 4 through 7 are not evenly distributed.

Table 3

Aggregate Time Allotted* to Top Ten Stories, Overall and by Program

Story Subject	Program			
	Channel One		Newsroom	
	Mean (in secs)	# Stories	Mean (in secs)	# Stories
Persian Gulf War	139	67	125	109
U.S. War Reaction	142	23	111	28
U.S. Economy	77	15	100	5
U.S. Entertainment	77	17	98	6
U.S. Science	92	15	175	1**
Baltic War	45	11	162	3
Non-U.S. Science	98	4	122	6
U.S. Education	123	5	139	10
U.S. Govt. Activities	119	9	127	10
U.S. Cultural Problems	000	0	72	10

*Mean time allotments, in seconds, over two-month period, regardless of story placement in program. Channel One was a 10-minute program, Newsroom a 15-minute program. Proportions of total newscast not accounted for in this table.

**Does not include Newsroom stories in U.S. regional science category.

Table 4

Social and Racial/Ethnic Characteristics of Reporters

	Program				
	Channel One		Newsroom		Total
	N	%	N	%	N
White Male	8	4%	89	63%	97
Minority Male	80	40%	3	2%	83
White Female	75	38%	22	16%	97
Minority Female	37	19%	28	20%	65
Total	200		142		342*

x^2=164.16, df=3, p<.001.

*Certain stories (especially those on Newsroom) were reported by more than one reporter. On Newsroom, these often were stories reported by the anchors. Figures do not add up to 100 percent because of rounding.

Table 5

Teenagers as Sources and as Story Focus, by Program

Story Number	Program						Program					
	Times as Source/# Programs/Pct.						Times as Focus/# Programs/Pct.					
	Channel One			Newsroom			Channel One			Newsroom		
1	1	37	2.7%	0	37	0.0%	1	37	2.7%	0	37	0.0%
2	5	37	13.5	1	37	2.7	8	37	21.6	1	37	2.7
3	5	37	13.5	2	37	5.4	6	37	16.2	1	37	2.7
4	6	36	16.7	4	36	11.1	7	36	19.5	7	36	19.5
5	5	37	13.5	1	37	2.7	16	33	48.5	2	33	6.1
6	12	27	44.4	3	23	13.0	14	27	51.8	4	23	17.4
7	1	4	25.0	1	10	10.0	2	4	50.0	1	10	10.0

Table 6

Teen Involvement by General Story Topics

Story Topic	Program Pct. of Time Involved and Degree of Involvement Channel One				Newsroom			
	None	Some	High	% Stories Involved	None	Some	High	% Stories Involved
Military	84	11	12	21.5%	131	6	4	7.1%
Government	12	5	0	29.4	18	0	0	0.0
Justice/Rights	6	0	0	0.0	3	0	0	0.0
Economic	11	4	1	31.2	8	0	0	0.0
Social	4	1	0	20.0	2	0	0	0.0
Science	12	4	3	36.8	9	0	0	0.0
Culture	3	1	0	25.0	11	2	0	15.4
Entertainment	14	2	3	26.3	5	1	0	16.7
Education	1	3	2	83.3	6	1	5	100.0

*Percent of time involved arrived at by adding Some and High categories and dividing sum by total number of stories in each category.

Notes

(1) The second step is an investigation into the reactions of educators and how teachers are using Channel One and/or Newsroom. The third step is a study of student reaction to, and uses of, the programs.

(2) The authors obtained copies of Newsroom broadcasts by taping them off a local feed to an area cable station. They obtained Whittle's Channel One broadcasts through the cooperation of Greg Welker, Library Assistant at Wayne College, a regional campus of the University of Akron. Whittle provided the technical information necessary to access the KU-band satellite transmissions but would not provide tapes of the broadcasts themselves.

(3) Totals for the two programs in subsequent analyses do not always equal those figures because of several Compute or Select If computer commands used by the authors. In those instances, cases must meet two or more criteria for the SFSS program to select them. In addition, because there were so few programs carrying an eighth story, they were dropped from analysis also. Effects on analyses were negligible.

(4) A copy of the content classification categories is available from the authors.

(5) The formula used was $R = 2(C1,C2)/C1 + C2$. Two coders made 94 category assignments and agreed on 90; $R = .957$.

(6) Stories are discussed here in terms of seconds. However, Channel One has 10 minutes for news and Newsroom 15. Story times were not computed as proportions of the total news hole for this project because the authors believed the mean times were sufficient for a pilot study. In future expanded studies, proportions will be computed and the topic addressed more fully.

References

Anon. (1989, April 10). School daze. The New Republic, pp. 7-8.

Cheatham, B. M. and Cohen, A. (1989, July). Channel One forges ahead despite complaints about ads. School Library Journal, 35, pp. 9-10.

Daly, P. L. (1990, October). Schools dump Channel One tv? American Teacher, p. 6.

Dominick, J. R. (1981). Business coverage in network newscasts. Journalism Quarterly, 58 (2), 179-185, 191.

Finn, C. E., Jr. (1989, May). A nation still at risk. Commentary, pp. 17-23.

Gerbner, G. & Gross, L. (1976). Living with television: the violence profile. Journal of Communication, 26 (Spring), 172-199.

Gosewisch, B. M. (1989, May). Channel One: one pilot school gives a thumbs up. Electronic Learning, pp. 12ff.

Graves, B. (1990, March). Classrooms tune in. School Administrator, pp. 8-11, 14-16.

Greenberg, M. & Wartenberg, D. (1990). Network television evening news coverage of infectious disease events. Journalism Quarterly, 67 (2), 142-146.

Haney, J.M. (1989, November). TV 101: Good broadcast journalism for the classroom?. Paper delivered at the annual meeting of the Speech Communication Association, San Francisco.

Lail, J. (1990, November). What's a Whittle? Washington Journalism Review, pp. 24-28.

Lichty, L. W. & Bailey, G. A. (1978). Reading the wind: reflections on content analysis of broadcast news. In W. Adams & F. Schreibman (Eds.), Television network news: issues in content research (pp. 111-129). Washington, DC.: George Washington University.

Lindlof, T. R. & Canning, W. R. (1980). Network news coverage of the broadcast media. Journalism Quarterly, 57 (2), 333-338.

Newman, M. (1989, April 10). Citizen Chris. The New Republic, p. 13.

North, R. C., Holsti, O. R., Zaninovich, M. G. & Zinnes, D. A. (1963). Content analysis: a handbook with applications for the study of international crisis. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Paraschos, M. & Rutherford, B. (1985). Network news coverage of invasion of Lebanon by Israeli in 1982. Journalism Quarterly, 62 (3), 457-464.

Randall, D. M. (1987). The portrayal of corporate crime in network television newscasts. Journalism Quarterly, 64 (1), 150-153, 250.

Reese, S. D., Daly, J. A., & Hardy, A. P. (1987). Economic news on network television. Journalism Quarterly, 64, (1), 137-144.

Rist, M.C. (1989, September). Mass marketers have a sweet deal for you, but there are strings attached. American School Board Journal, pp. 20-24, 39.

Rosentiel, T. B. (1990, June 28). Media study finds 'age of indifference.' Los Angeles Times, p. 6.

Rudinow, J. (1989-1990, December-January). Channel One whittles away at education. Educational Leadership, pp. 70-73.

Rukeyser, W.S. (1989-1990, December-January). No hidden agenda: a response to Rudinow. Educational Leadership, pp. 74-75.

Sneed, D. et. al. (1989, August). Media literacy ignored: a qualitative call for the introduction of media studies across the high school social science curriculum. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C.

Wimmer, R. D. and Dominick, J. R. (1991. Mass media research: an introduction (3rd ed.). Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Co.

Wulfemeyer K. T. and Mueller, B. (1990, August). Commercials in the classroom: a content analysis of Channel One advertisements. Paper presented at the annual convention of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Minneapolis.

Television News and Entertainment Exposure, Educational Experiences, and College Students' Race-Related Beliefs: Material Factors and Symbolic Racism.

G. Blake Armstrong
Assistant Professor
Department of Communication Arts
University of Wisconsin-Madison

Paper presented to the Communication Theory and Methodology Division at the 1991 Annual Conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, MA (August).

ABSTRACT

Television News and Entertainment Exposure, Educational Experiences, and College Students' Race-Related Beliefs: Material Factors and Symbolic Racism.

A telephone survey of 144 white university students assessed media exposure and educational factors predicting "symbolic racist" attitudes and beliefs about black socioeconomic outcomes. News and non-news TV exposure measures correlated with different types of beliefs. Greater exposure to non-news content was associated with higher estimates of average black family income, education, and occupational status, and with believing that blacks committed fewer crimes. Higher levels of local news and public affairs exposure were associated with believing that more blacks were unemployed, in poverty, or on welfare, and with disbelieving in the reality of anti-black job discrimination. Students having college coursework on racial issues were more likely to agree that anti-black job discrimination remains a serious problem and to support affirmative action policies. Fraternity/sorority residence predicted opposition to affirmative action and a belief in anti-white discrimination.

Television News and Entertainment Exposure, Educational Experiences, and College Students' Race-Related Beliefs: Material Factors and Symbolic Racism.

One has only to pick up a daily newspaper from any major American city to be reminded of the serious problems of racial division and hostility in the United States, and has only to follow nearly any campus newspaper to be assured that racial conflict and animosity survive also at the academy. The upsurge over the past several years in overt manifestations of racism on major university campuses is both a cause for concern about the social attitudes of our best educated citizens and an indication that mere presence at an institution of higher education does not insulate one from the influence on racial beliefs and attitudes of the broader culture and communication environment. Many colleges and universities have gone so far as to institute special educational programs to address concerns over the racial atmosphere on campus, although the effect of such programs on deeply-rooted beliefs and attitudes (often reinforced through cultural institutions) has been open to question.

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of media exposure on the one hand, and experiences associated with university education on the other, on race related beliefs and attitudes. Education per se has often been assumed to increase tolerance and has been associated with a decline in scores on measures of traditional racial stereotyping (Bobo & Licari, 1989; Greeley & Sheatsley, 1974; Sniderman, Brody, & Kuklinski, 1984). However, some scholars have argued that education-related increases in apparent tolerance reflect merely superficial ideological refinements that actually serve to better justify the racial status quo (e.g., Jackman & Muha, 1984). Four aspects of the university experience were considered: merely proceeding through a normal academic program, as reflected in the academic class of the student; the student's degree of intellectual achievement or lack thereof, as reflected by grade point average; exposure to coursework specifically addressing racial issues; and residence in fraternities or sororities, which are commonly regarded as centers of racial reaction among university student bodies.

Formal educational experiences are, of course, neither the only nor even the primary sources of white students' knowledge about racial issues. A large amount of information relevant to race and ethnicity is also available from the mass media. Since many citizens have few direct sources of knowledge about racial and ethnic matters, we would expect major media to have a considerable potential to influence race-related knowledge, beliefs, and attitudes. Even when it comes to initial learning about race and ethnicity, a large proportion of white children report gaining most of their information about nonwhites through the mass media, particularly television (Greenberg & Atkin, 1982). And while direct experience and interpersonal communication undoubtedly have major impacts on racial beliefs (Greenberg & Wintermantel, 1989; Stephan & Rosenfield, 1978; van Dijk, 1985), it should not be overlooked that media messages are themselves important influences on the content of interpersonal conversations about race (van Dijk, 1987).

Racial attitudes and beliefs.

While the bulk of research on both media and educational effects on racial attitudes has addressed traditional questions of social role learning and social stereotyping (Greenberg, 1986), much of the broader social research on racial conflict has moved away from a focus on traditional racial stereotyping and toward questions about the role of realistic material conflicts between groups, perceptions of social equity, and "modern" or "symbolic" racism (Taylor & Moghaddam, 1987). The present study focuses on racial beliefs and attitudes relevant to this latter set of concerns.

Socioeconomic and equity beliefs.

Conflict over relative power and privilege is an essential feature of interethnic relations (Bobo, 1983; Giles & Evans, 1986; McClendon, 1985), so much so that support for maintaining or changing such relations often appears relatively impervious to changes in more overt racial stereotyping (Jackman and Crane, 1986; Jackman & Muha, 1984). As a result, perceptions about the racial distribution of socioeconomic outcomes (e.g., income, jobs, education), changes in this distribution, and the fairness of this arrangement are extremely important (Gurr, 1970; Oberschall, 1973; cf., Groskind, 1989). Reactions of whites toward political efforts to redress racial inequalities must depend to a large degree on perceptions concerning the amount and nature of inequalities that actually exist. Justification for strong civil rights laws, affirmative action policies, and direct economic assistance, depend upon perceptions that significant injustices exist and would be perpetuated in the absence of these sorts of governmental interventions.

Moreover, socioeconomic perceptions can themselves influence other aspects of racial attitudes. Social equity theories argue that inequitable material or social relations are discomforting both to the advantaged and to the disadvantaged, motivating the former especially to attempt to legitimize any significant inequality in groups' outcomes by ascribing to the groups unequal contributions or unequal worth, or by engaging in some other psychologically satisfying rationalization (Messick & Cook, 1983; Walster, Walster, & Berscheid, 1978).

This study assessed how white students' beliefs about racial differences in income levels, occupational prestige, education, poverty, and unemployment were related to educational background and media use.

Symbolic racism.

A number of scholars have argued that the functional aspect of ethnic attitudes, at least among middle-class whites, now has less to do with traditional prejudice than with what has been termed "symbolic" or "modern" racism (McConahay, 1986; McConahay & Hough, 1976; Sears & McConahay, 1973). Symbolic racism has been defined as "the expression in terms of abstract ideological symbols and symbolic behaviors of the feeling that blacks are violating cherished values and making illegitimate demands for changes in the racial status quo" (McConahay & Hough, 1976, p. 38). Symbolic racism has at least three components: (1) the feeling that blacks (or other minorities) are becoming too demanding, want more than the rights that everyone else has, and have not legitimately earned what they have; (2) the feeling that blacks are threatening personally cherished (Protestant) values; and (3) an expression in terms of symbols, such as "welfare, black anger and militance, riots, black mayors, crime in the streets, affirmative action programs...." (McConahay & Hough, 1976, p. 38).

The construct of symbolic racism shares at least one feature with the perspective emphasizing racial conflict over socioeconomic outcomes, in that both ascribe significant importance to beliefs about fairness and equity. However, symbolic racism differs here from the earlier perspective in especially emphasizing the importance of the belief that blacks demand and receive unfair advantages over whites. The symbolic racist thus not only denies the continued existence of discrimination or unfair treatment directed against blacks; he or she simultaneously asserts that blacks are presently afforded unfair advantages due to "reverse" discrimination. This perspective is associated at the policy level with strong opposition to affirmative action or to any policies designed to improve the opportunities of blacks or other minorities.

Media Exposure and Racial Attitudes and Beliefs

The performance of news media on race-related issues has been open to continuing scrutiny since the scathing indictment offered by the Kerner commission report over 20 years ago (Kerner, 1968). The potential influence of TV entertainment on racial stereotyping has also generated a considerable body of research (Greenberg, 1986). The latter endeavor is supported by a large body of evidence attesting to the influence on social perceptions not only of reality content, but also of entertainment media, particularly fictional TV entertainment series (Hawkins & Pingree, 1982).

Most scholars have approached the influence of media exposure on beliefs about social reality implicitly or explicitly from a cumulative effects perspective, which argues that long-term accumulation of many consistent pieces of information or mediated experience gradually helps shape beliefs about the real world (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986; Hawkins & Pingree, 1982). This perspective is consistent with "information integration" models of social cognition and attitude change (Anderson, 1974; Kaplowitz, Fink, Armstrong & Bauer, 1986) and with cognitive models of categorization and prototype formation (Hayes-Roth & Hayes-Roth, 1977).[1]

Influence of television entertainment and news viewing on racial socioeconomic beliefs.

Numerous content analytic studies have examined the social and economic portrayals of blacks in network TV fiction series. Whereas the 1970's was the decade of the prime-time black situation comedy, in which black characters were often portrayed as working- or lower-middle class and interacted most often in racially segregated settings (Baptista-Fernandez & Greenberg, 1980; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, 1979),[2] programming in the 1980's featured models of successful black professionals and black agents of authority (Stroman, Merritt,

& Matabane, 1988), along with upscaled versions of the black sitcom. Application of the theme of a successful black middle class extended to the increased number of black characters shown in integrated settings (Gandy & Matabane, 1989).

The cumulative effects approach to media social reality effects suggests that exposure to 1980's-style fictional TV portrayals should influence whites' beliefs about the economic standing of black Americans in the direction of perceptions that blacks are relatively better off: that is, that average black and white socioeconomic outcomes are more similar. A second line of reasoning also supports this expectation: Meyrowitz (1985) has argued that merely by providing mediated contact with the "backstage" lives of members of other social groups, fictional television narrative de-emphasizes group differences. Viewers thereby gain at least the illusion of greater similarity between themselves and typical members of other groups (cf., Matabane, 1988). While we would expect the strongest effect to result from exposure to programs featuring prominent black characters, a general effect of overall entertainment exposure is also possible (cf., Armstrong & Neuendorf, 1989).

H(1): Students exposed to higher amounts of TV fictional entertainment (particularly programs featuring black stars or co-stars) will perceive black Americans as relatively better off socioeconomically: as having (relatively) higher incomes; a higher percentage who are college graduates and who are employed in professional and managerial capacities; a lower percentage unemployed, in poverty, or on welfare.

TV news exposure may have quite different effects on beliefs about racial socioeconomic outcomes. Armstrong & Neuendorf (1989) argued that TV news, particularly local news, emphasizes images of black Americans as socioeconomically worse off, in contrast to the affluent middle-class portrayals prevalent in fictional TV entertainment (cf., Gray, 1987; Entman, 1991). It was predicted that heavier viewing of TV news, particularly local news, would be associated with beliefs that blacks were doing worse socioeconomically.

H(2): Students who are more highly exposed to TV news (particularly local news) will perceive black Americans to be relatively worse off socioeconomically: that is, to have (relatively) lower incomes; a lower percentage who are college graduates and who are employed in professional and managerial capacities; and a higher percentage unemployed, in poverty, and on welfare.

Influence of television entertainment and news viewing on beliefs relevant to symbolic racism, racial fairness, and equity.

Entman (1991; 1990) has argued that local TV news, as a result of normal news operations, presents information in a manner that directly reinforces "modern" or "symbolic" racism: specifically, that white hostility and fear are reinforced by racially salient crime news; that news of black political figures is presented in a way that delegitimizes claims for special consideration or affirmative action policies; and that the presentation of some blacks as assimilated symbols of authority can support the contention that blacks are not really harmed by continuing racial discrimination. The juxtaposition of these assimilated middle-class images with extensive attention to the black urban underclass supports the belief that the problems of the latter are the result of individual failings or subcultural weaknesses rather than racism or external social structural factors (Gray, 1989).

Based on this reasoning, it was hypothesized that TV news viewing, particularly viewing of local TV news, would be associated with the following beliefs: that blacks are responsible for a greater number of crimes, that a higher percentage of blacks live off welfare, that anti-black discrimination is less prevalent and anti-white discrimination more prevalent, and that affirmative action policies are unjustified.

H(3): Students who are more highly exposed to TV news (particularly local news) will perceive that blacks are responsible for a relatively larger proportion of crimes committed.

H(4): Students who are more highly exposed to TV news (particularly local news) will perceive that a higher percentage of blacks depend on welfare payments for their income.

H(5): Students who are more highly exposed to TV news will perceive that black Americans are treated more fairly in American society: that anti-black job discrimination is a less serious problem; and that blacks are paid equitably with whites with whom they share the same educational background.

H(6): Students who are more highly exposed to TV news will perceive that white Americans are treated less fairly in American society: that anti-white job discrimination is more prevalent.

H(7): Students who are more highly exposed to TV news will express greater opposition to affirmative action policies.

TV entertainment content may also play a role in influencing beliefs and attitudes associated with symbolic racism. The previously discussed focus of black TV entertainment portrayals during the last decade on upwardly mobile middle-class professionals carries with it an implication that discrimination and prejudice no longer provide significant structural impediments to blacks' occupational and economic aspirations (Gray, 1989; Miller, 1986; cf., Entman, 1990). Certainly, discussion or portrayal of serious discrimination appears very infrequently in fictional TV entertainment series (Baptista-Fernandez & Greenberg, 1980; Gandy & Matabane, 1989; Volgy & Schwarz, 1980). Integrating such racial information into ones belief structure about racial issues should promote the perception that anti-black discrimination is no longer a serious problem for blacks who are as able and hard-working as whites, and should support the belief that demands for special measures to help black Americans are unjustified.

The same messages would seem to be implied by another form of television entertainment content: TV sports. TV sports programming presents numerous examples of highly-successful and highly-paid black athletes. In spite of occasional incidents in which racism in the sports world is revealed, the predominant image is that of blacks competing successfully with whites on an even, nondiscriminatory playing field. Moreover, when examples occur of black sports figures falling from grace (such as athletes getting in trouble with drugs or the law), these failures are presented as resulting from personal character flaws rather than discrimination or racism. Once again, the message implied by this content is that there are ample opportunities for blacks who are able and who have good character. Failure is due to personal failings.

H(7): Students exposed to higher amounts of TV fictional entertainment (particularly programs featuring black stars or co-stars) will perceive that black Americans are treated more fairly in American society: that anti-black job discrimination is a less serious problem; and that blacks are paid equitably with whites with whom they share the same educational background.

H(8): Students exposed to higher amounts of TV sports will perceive that black Americans are treated more fairly in American society: that anti-black job discrimination is a less serious problem; and that blacks are paid equitably with whites with whom they share the same educational background.

H(9): Students exposed to higher amounts of TV fictional entertainment (particularly programs featuring black stars or co-stars) will express greater opposition to affirmative action policies.

H(10): Students exposed to higher amounts of TV sports will express greater opposition to affirmative action policies.

One way in which fictional TV content contrasts sharply with news content is in regard to racial portrayals of criminals. Networks and program producers have largely avoided the disproportionate casting of blacks as criminals, most likely in response to the obvious sensitivity of this stereotype and because of a belief on the part of programmers that white audiences prefer nonthreatening images of blacks (Baptista-Fernandez & Greenberg, 1980; Gray, 1986). This avoidance of disproportionately casting black characters in TV fiction as villains or criminals may serve to counter to some degree the criminal stereotype implicit in much TV news content.

H(11): Students exposed to higher amounts of TV fictional entertainment (particularly programs featuring black stars or co-stars) will perceive that blacks are responsible for a relatively smaller proportion of crimes committed.

Method

144 students from a Big-10 university were surveyed by telephone over a two-week period in November and December 1990. Interviewers were three graduate and three undergraduate students from a seminar in communication and interethnic behavior. Respondents were selected from student directory listings using a multistage probability sampling procedure.[3] Respondents unavailable after three callbacks were replaced by new numbers.

Respondents were administered a 15-20 minute survey instrument containing items measuring demographic background, educational experiences, opinions about racial issues, estimates of statistical distributions relevant to race relations, level of high school and neighborhood racial integration, and media use.

Measures of Demographics and Educational Background

Demographic items used as control variables in the analysis included family income level, state of residence, size of home community, and respondent sex. Respondents placed their family income into one of eight categories, ranging from "less than $20,000" to "$100,000 or more." They were asked to report whether they came from a rural area, a small town, a suburban area, a small city, or a big city. Students were classified as "in-state" residents or "out-of-state" non-residents, according to their reported home town or city. Interviewers noted the respondent's sex.

Respondents were asked their own racial/ethnic background, and were also asked to estimate the racial mix of their home high school and their home neighborhood. The high school question asked: "Out of every 10 people in your high school, approximately how many were black, how many were white, and how many were in some other racial group, like Hispanic or Asian?" The neighborhood question was of the same form.

A number of questions addressed our respondents' backgrounds and experiences at the university. Students were asked to report their level at the university, ranging from freshman (coded "1") to graduate student (coded "5"). They were also asked their grade point average and academic major. In addition, respondents were asked whether they recalled having taken any courses at the university that dealt specifically with the racial situation in America.

One question asked in what type of residence the respondent was living at the university (dormitory, apartment, fraternity/sorority, etc.). The main purpose of this measure was to assess whether fraternity/sorority living was associated with more negative attitudes toward blacks, as suggested by recent incidents and common belief. For purposes of analysis, students were therefore dichotomously classified as living at a fraternity/sorority or living in some other arrangement.

Measures of Racial Beliefs and Attitudes

Socioeconomic beliefs.

Six items asked respondents to provide statistical estimates of the social and economic outcomes of black Americans. In each case, a parallel "baseline" figure for white Americans (from the *Statistical Abstract of the United States*) was provided, so responses can be interpreted as reflecting beliefs about the outcomes of blacks *relative* to those of whites.

Two items dealt with incomes, one with educational achievement, one with occupational achievement, one with poverty, and one with unemployment. Respondents were told that the average income of white families in the U.S. was about $32,000, and were asked to give their best estimate of the average income of black families. Similarly, they were informed that the average family headed by a white college graduate made $49,000, and were asked to estimate the parallel figure for black families. The latter question more directly measured perceptions of equity in black/white relations, since it assessed perceived income differences between blacks and whites largely controlling for level of ability and training.

In separate questions, respondents were told that approximately 21% of white Americans over the age of 25 were college graduates, and that about 24% of whites were employed in professional and managerial occupations, and were asked to provide their respective estimates for black Americans.

With regard to negative socioeconomic outcomes, respondents were informed that the unemployment rate for white Americans was 5.3%, and that 10.5% of whites lived below the poverty line. They were asked for their estimates of the percentage of black Americans unemployed and the percentage living below the poverty line.

Symbolic racism and beliefs about racial fairness.

Several types of beliefs and attitudes relating to symbolic racism were assessed: specifically, beliefs about black crime, beliefs about the proportion of blacks on welfare, beliefs about job discrimination against blacks and against whites, and attitudes in support of or opposition to affirmative action.

Students were told that about three percent of white women were receiving welfare, and were asked to estimate the percentage of black women receiving welfare. They were also told that blacks made up about 12% of the U.S. population, and were asked to estimate the percentage of people arrested for violent crimes who are black.

To assess student beliefs about racial job discrimination, students were asked to respond on a four-point scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree to the statement, "Even today, racial discrimination significantly limits the employment opportunities of many black Americans." On the same scale, they were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the assertion that "Many white people now lose out on jobs and promotions because blacks and other minorities are given preferential treatment."

Two items concerning affirmative action measures were also included. One question asked respondents to agree or disagree on a four-point scale that, "In their student admissions policies, colleges and universities should set aside a certain number of spaces for qualified blacks and other minorities." The second question asked whether, "In hiring faculty, colleges and universities should set aside a certain number of positions for qualified blacks and other minorities." Although these questions described measures that most would refer to as quota policies, the word "quota" was never used. Answers to these two items were correlated .85, so they were combined to form a single measure of support for affirmative action at the university.

Media exposure.

Three types of news-related TV content and three types of non-news TV content were measured in the interview, along with newspaper exposure.

To assess TV news exposure, respondents were asked how many days out of the week they watched at least one national network news program on TV, and how many days during the week they watched at least one local TV news program. In addition, they were asked how many hours each week, on the average, they spent watching news-related public affairs programs like "60-minutes," "20-20," "Larry King Live," and "Nightline."

Fictional TV entertainment exposure was measured by asking respondents how many hours they spent viewing on an average weekday before 6 p.m. and after 6 p.m., how many hours they spent viewing yesterday in these two time periods and how many hours they spend viewing in these two time periods on an average

Saturday. The estimates of hours-per-day viewed for each of these days were highly intercorrelated, and therefore were added to form a single TV fictional entertainment exposure measure.

Respondents were also asked how many hours of TV sports programming they watched over the course of an average weekend and how many TV entertainment programs featuring black stars or co-stars they normally watched in an average week.

Respondents were asked whether they read any newspapers on a regular basis. If they answered "yes," they were asked which newspapers they read regularly. For each newspaper mentioned, they were then asked how many days per week they read that paper, and on days they read that paper, how many minutes per day they spent doing so. An overall newspaper exposure score was calculated by multiplying the number of days reported reading each individual newspaper by the number of minutes per day reading that paper. These products were then summed across all newspapers read.

This resulted overall in seven media exposure measures: national network TV news exposure, local TV news exposure, exposure to news-related public affairs TV programs, fictional TV entertainment exposure, exposure to TV programs featuring blacks, TV sports exposure, and newspaper exposure.

Analysis

Analytical procedures included zero-order correlational analysis, and hierarchical multiple regression analysis. Demographic, educational, and media use measures were used to predict racial attitudes and perceptions. In addition, the relationship between material perceptions such as perceived black family incomes and the policy issue of support for quota-based affirmative action policies was explored.

Given not only the likelihood of quite different perceptions on the part of nonwhites but also the possibility that the relationships between media use and social perceptions may also differ by race, it seemed inappropriate to analyze whites and nonwhites together. Our original sample contained only 12 nonwhites, making it impossible to separately analyze the relationships between variables for these groups. Analysis was conducted exclusively on responses from students identifying themselves as either "white" or "Jewish."

Prior to correlational or regression analysis, variables were assessed in terms of their conformity with distributional assumptions of least-squares methods. Several variables were highly skewed, and required transformation using natural logarithms of their raw scores to normalize them (Mosteller & Tukey, 1977). Log transformed independent variables were: the newspaper exposure summary score, hours-per-week viewing TV public affairs programs, black TV programs viewed per week, and hours viewing TV sports per weekend. The dependent measures of estimated black unemployment rate, percent blacks in poverty, and percent blacks on welfare also required logarithmic transformation.[4]

Separate hierarchical regressions predicted perceived average black family income, average black college graduate income, percent black college graduates, percent blacks employed in professional or managerial jobs, percent blacks unemployed, percent blacks in poverty, percent blacks on welfare, and percent of violent crimes committed by blacks. Similar regressions were performed predicting responses to the measures of beliefs about job discrimination and support for or opposition to affirmative action measures.

Mean substitution was used for missing independent measures in the regression analyses. In order to account for possible effects of nonrandomly missing data, an additional variable was constructed for each case with a value equal to the total number of missing items for that case. This variable was then included as a control in each regression analysis, as recommended by Cohen and Cohen (1983; pp. 284-297).[5]

In each regression analysis, demographic background variables were entered first (respondent sex, state of residence, family income, size of home community), followed by high school/community integration and number of missing independent variables. The set of education-related measures was entered next (level at college, grade point average, fraternity or sorority residence, having taken a racial/ethnic class). The media exposure measures were entered on the final step.

For both theoretical and empirical reasons (i.e., overcoming multicollinearity effects), the contributions of sets of related media variables were assessed along with the significance of individual measures. The significance of the increment contributed to R^2 when a set of related predictors was added last to the regression model was used for these tests (Monge, 1980).

We were also interested in the relationship between beliefs about the real status of black Americans in the United States and actual policy positions such as support for affirmative action at the university. Logically, the belief that black and white outcomes are more equal should lead to lower support for measures designed to aid blacks. In addition, the concept of "modern" or "symbolic" racism implies that opposition to measures designed to improve the status of minorities is related to a complex of beliefs including the denial of present-day discrimination and the association of blacks with threatening or culturally disvalued behaviors. A stepwise multiple regression analysis was conducted in which support for student and faculty quotas was predicted by the following set of variables: Perceived average black family income; perceived average black college graduate income; perceived percentage of blacks who are college graduates; perceived percentage of blacks employed in professional or managerial jobs; perceived black unemployment rate; perceived percentage of black women on welfare; perceived percentage of blacks in poverty; and perceived percentage of violent criminals who are black. A second analysis included these predictors plus level of agreement with the statement that blacks still endure job discrimination and agreement that whites lose out on jobs and promotions because of preference given to blacks.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The sample was 46 percent male and 54 percent female. The method of choosing respondents through the student directory evidently resulted in a bias toward more advanced students, with only 28% of the sample being freshman or sophomores. Twenty-five percent reported having taken at least one class that dealt with race in the United States.

The majority (56%) of the respondents came from "suburban" or "small city" backgrounds. Twenty-two percent said that they were from big cities and 22% were from small town or rural areas. The median family income range of the sample was $50,000-$60,000. Fewer than 20% reported that more than one student in their high school out of every 10 had been black (49% answered "0"). Their home communities were even more segregated, with seventy-three percent reporting that "0" out of every 10 people in their home neighborhood were black. Only about 2% of respondents gave a response of "2" or more out of 10.

Thirty percent of our respondents reported reading no newspapers regularly, 34% one newspaper, 21% two newspapers, and 15% three or more newspapers. Most students read only campus newspapers. Although many newspapers are easily available in the community, the only out-of-town newspaper with any substantial readership was the New York Times, with about 15%. A median 20-minutes per day were spent reading all newspapers combined.

The median number of days per week in which a network TV news broadcast was viewed was three. Local TV news was less widely viewed, with a median of two days-per-week. The median number of hours per week spent watching news related public affairs programs was one.

The average respondent reported viewing 2.2 hours of fictional TV entertainment on the average weekday, but only 1.8 hours the previous day and 1.8 hours on the average Saturday. The median TV sports viewing reported was 1.5 hours per weekend; median viewing of black programs was 2 programs per week.

Respondents expressed a mild degree of positive support for the idea of student admissions and faculty hiring quotas, with a mean of 5.4 and median of 6 on a 2-8 scale of support. Students expressed mild agreement with the contention that racial discrimination still limits black employment opportunity (mean = 3.04 on a 1-4 scale), while mildly disagreeing that whites are discriminated against (mean = 2.14).

It is interesting to examine the accuracy of statistical perceptions of white students about the outcomes of black Americans. In terms of mean responses, our sample estimated the yearly income of the average black family to be $20,850, compared to $32,000 for whites, for a ratio of .65. The $32,000 figure was from 1987 as reported in the Statistical Abstract of the United States. The comparable figure for black families from the same source was $18,000, for a ratio of .56. Thus respondents moderately overestimated the relative incomes of black families.

The sample overall estimated that about 11% of blacks were college graduates compared to 21% of whites. The average response seemed to reflect a highly accurate perception of this aspect of racial outcomes. According to the

Statistical Abstract of the U.S., 10.7% of blacks over age 25 were college graduates in 1987 (when the 21% figure for whites was obtained).

Respondents estimated on the average that 12.4% of blacks were employed in professional or managerial occupations: a slight underestimation of the comparable population figure of 14%. Our sample estimated that the average family headed by a black college graduate earned $38,460, compared to $49,000 for whites, which was again very accurate. The actual population value was $38,000.

The mean estimate of the unemployment rate among blacks was also quite close to real population figures (12.5% compared to a population value of 13%), but this average was distorted by a substantial positive skew. The median estimate of black unemployment was a lower and less accurate 10.5%. The distribution of estimates of the percentage of black families living in poverty was also positively skewed, yielding a mean estimate of 23.1% and a median estimate of 20%. Both of these figures represented substantial underestimations when compared to the relevant population statistics (about 33%).

The mean estimate of the percentage of black women receiving welfare in 1984 (when 3% of white women were receiving welfare) was 16.1%; the median estimate was only 12%, revealing substantial positive skew. The population figure of 14% fell between these values.

Finally, the sample estimated that about 41% of people arrested for violent crimes were black, which is slightly lower than the comparable population figure of 47%.

Hypothesis Tests

Perceived average black family income.

Table 1 reports the correlation and hierarchical regression results predicting estimates of average yearly black family income. Demographic controls failed to predict estimates either as a group or individually. However, both media and education measures contributed significantly. In both correlational and regression analyses, students who were more advanced were likely to give lower estimates of average black income. Significant zero-order correlations were also obtained for having taken a course on racial/ethnic relations and for living in a fraternity or sorority, with racial/ethnic classes associated with lower black income estimates and Greek membership with higher estimates. Since the overall mean estimate of average black income was high compared to the population figures, this suggests that being further along in the college program and having taken a course on the topic were associated with somewhat more accurate perceptions, while lower accuracy was associated marginally with fraternity/sorority membership.

Among media exposure variables, the non-news TV exposure measures contributed most strongly to beliefs about black income. Fictional TV entertainment exposure, viewing black programs, and TV sports viewing were all significantly correlated with beliefs in higher black incomes. With partialling in the regression, only fictional entertainment exposure remained individually significant; however the increment contributed to R^2 by this whole set of predictors remained strongly significant.

In contrast, of news exposure measures, only TV public affairs program exposure and newspaper reading were even marginally significant ($p < .10$) in the correlational analysis, and both were rendered nonsignificant in the regression equation.

Perceived percent black college graduates.

Table 2 shows results of the analysis predicting estimates of the percentage of black Americans who are college graduates. Three demographic controls made at least marginal contributions: respondent sex (males gave lower estimates), state of residence (in-state students gave lower estimates), and size of home community (respondents from larger communities gave lower estimates).

Education variables were again highly significant predictors of material perceptions. Level at the university and grade point average were each negatively correlated with perceived percentage of blacks graduating college, while having taken a racial/ethnic class was associated with higher percentage estimates. Under regression controls, the effect of the racial/ethnic class variable remained individually highly significant. A separate examination of group means showed that respondents who had taken a class concerning racial/ethnic relations overestimated the proportion of black college graduates, while students who had not taken such a class slightly underestimated this proportion. A marginal relationship also emerged in which fraternity/sorority residence was associated with beliefs that fewer blacks were college graduates.

As with perceived family incomes, it was non-news TV exposure rather than news exposure that was the stronger predictor of social perceptions. However, in this case it was exposure specifically to programs featuring black stars and co-stars that most strongly predicted perceptions, rather than general fiction exposure. Again, the direction as predicted was toward belief in more favorable black socioeconomic outcomes.

Perceived proportion of blacks having professional occupations.

Table 3 reports the correlation and regression analyses relating to beliefs about the proportion of black Americans employed in professional and managerial occupations. As with beliefs about college graduates, females provided higher estimates than males. Contrary to the findings concerning black college graduation, none of the education variables significantly predicted occupational perceptions. Exposure to programs featuring black stars or co-stars was the only media exposure variable in the regression analysis to significantly predict beliefs about the proportion of blacks in professional occupations. Exposure to black programs was once more associated with a belief in more favorable black socioeconomic outcomes. In the zero-order correlation analysis only, network TV news exposure and exposure to TV public affairs programs were marginally related to lower estimates of the percentage of blacks employed as professionals or managers.

Perceived average income of black families headed by college graduate.

Table 4 reports correlation and regression results relating to beliefs about the average income of black college graduates. The most important predictors were from the education set, although there was also a highly significant effect of state of residence, with in-state students giving higher income estimates.

In the correlation analysis, a higher level at the university and having taken a course on race/ethnicity were associated with giving lower estimates of the average incomes of families of black college graduates. Living in a fraternity or sorority was associated with higher income estimates. The effects of racial/ethnic class and fraternity/sorority residence remained individually significant under partialling in the regression analysis.

The media variables were poor predictors of beliefs about black college graduate income. Exposure to TV public affairs programs was marginally associated with lower income estimates.

Perceived black unemployment rate.

Moving to estimates of what might be termed negative socioeconomic outcomes, we can demonstrate some similarities to the preceding findings and some interesting differences.

Table 5 reports the results of the analyses of perceived black unemployment rates. In the correlational analysis, males made significantly higher estimates of black unemployment than did females, and subjects from larger communities estimated higher degrees of black unemployment. Level at the university was significantly associated with unemployment estimates, with more advanced students giving higher figures. However, of these only respondent sex remained significant in the regression analysis.

Media variables made a significant contribution to beliefs about black unemployment, but in this case it was TV news exposure rather than non-news TV that made a difference. In the correlational analysis, local TV news exposure and TV public affairs program exposure were associated with higher estimates of black unemployment. In the regression analysis, local TV news strongly predicted higher estimates of black unemployment, but exposure to network news (controlling for local news exposure) was actually associated with lower estimates.

Perceived percentage of blacks living in poverty.

Table 6 reports the results concerning beliefs about the percentage of blacks living in poverty. No demographic controls made significant contributions. Three of four education variables were significantly correlated with beliefs about the black poverty rate, with a higher GPA and a higher academic level associated with higher poverty estimates, and fraternity/sorority residence associated with lower estimates, but all relationships became nonsignificant under controls. Similarly, negative zero-order relationships between fictional TV viewing and perceived poverty rate and between sports viewing and poverty estimates were also reduced to nonsignificance in the regression analysis.

However, media exposure as a whole contributed a significant increment of variance to the prediction of perceived black poverty rates, due primarily to the strong effects of the TV news exposure variables. In the regression analysis, exposure to local TV news and to news-related public affairs programs were associated with higher estimates of the percentage of blacks living in poverty, while network news exposure demonstrated the opposite impact.

Perceived percentage of black women on welfare.

Table 7 shows the correlation and regression results relating to beliefs about the proportion of black women receiving welfare. At the zero-order level, males and people from larger home communities gave higher estimates of the proportion of black women on welfare, while students coming from out of state gave marginally lower estimates. In the regression analysis, only the size of the home community remained significant.

In the correlation analysis, a higher academic level at the university was marginally associated with higher estimates of the proportion of black women on welfare. However, this relationship did not persist under controls in the regression analysis. Having taken a racial/ethnic class was associated with lower estimates of the proportion of black women on welfare, a relationship that remained marginally ($p < .10$) significant in the regression.

Two media exposure variables were significantly related to welfare beliefs in both the correlation and the regression analyses. Exposure to news-related public affairs programs predicted higher estimates of the percentage on welfare; exposure to programs featuring black stars and co-stars had the opposite effect.

Perceived percentage of people arrested for violent crimes who are black.

Table 8 reports the regression results and correlations relating to beliefs about the proportion of violent criminals who are black. Overall, the variables in the study predicted these beliefs rather poorly. In fact, the only set of variables to contribute even a marginally significant proportion of variance to this estimate was the non-news TV exposure set. The only individually significant predictor in the regression equation was fictional TV entertainment exposure, which was associated with a belief that blacks constitute a smaller percentage of the people arrested for violent crimes.

Beliefs about job discrimination.

Table 9 reports the correlation and regression analyses predicting agreement with the statement that "many white people now lose out on jobs and promotions because blacks and other minorities are given preferential treatment." Media exposure variables were poor predictors of agreement with this item, although local TV news exposure was significantly associated in the correlational analysis with higher levels of agreement. In the regression analysis, the only individually significant predictor of belief in anti-white job discrimination was residence in a college fraternity or sorority.

Table 10 reports parallel results for the item positing continuing job discrimination against black Americans. In this case, the education block as a whole contributed significantly to predicting level of agreement. The most important predictor among the education variables was having taken a class that dealt with racial/ethnic issues, which was associated with agreeing more strongly with the assertion that racial discrimination still limits the employment opportunities of many black Americans.

Among media exposure measures, local TV news exposure was negatively correlated with beliefs that blacks still endure job discrimination, a relationship which remained marginally significant in the regression analysis. Interestingly, the issue of job discrimination provides one of the few instances in which the influence of non-news TV exposure parallels that of news exposure. Exposure to programs featuring black stars and co-stars was most strongly associated with rejecting the notion of continuing anti-black job discrimination.

Belief in anti-black job bias was one of only two dependent variables whose values were significantly predicted by the presence of missing values among the independent variable set. Respondents who were missing data on one or more independent variable measures were more likely to disagree with the contention that blacks still endured job discrimination.

Support or opposition to affirmative action policies.

Table 11 reports correlation and regression results relating to support for student admissions and faculty hiring quotas to improve opportunity for blacks. It can be seen that the strongest predictor was fraternity/sorority residence. Respondents living in fraternities or sororities were significantly less likely to endorse setting aside places for qualified blacks in student admissions or faculty hiring.

All non-news TV viewing measures were negatively correlated with support for these affirmative action measures, but only the effect of viewing programs featuring black stars or co-stars remained even marginally significant under regression analysis. Negative correlations of local news and national news with support for quotas likewise disappeared under controls. Coming from a more integrated school or community background was marginally associated with support for such policies. Students who were missing one or more independent measures were marginally more likely to oppose affirmative action measures.

Table 12 reports results of the analysis relating racial perceptions examined earlier to support for affirmative action policies at the university. The stepwise regression analysis showed that believing in relatively higher income levels for black families and black college graduates significantly predicted opposition to the use of racial admissions and hiring quotas at the university. Higher estimates of the proportion of blacks on welfare also marginally predicted opposition to these measures.

When perceived anti-black job discrimination and perceived anti-white job bias were included in a stepwise analysis with the other variables (Table 13), both made significant impacts. Belief in continuing anti-black discrimination was associated with support for setting aside positions for qualified blacks, while agreement that whites lose out on jobs and promotions due to preference for blacks predicted opposition. As in the previous analysis, the belief that black college graduates earn relatively more money predicted opposition to such special measures to assist blacks. However, beliefs about general black family income levels and proportion of blacks on welfare were nonsignificant when the regression analysis included the job discrimination items.

Discussion

The relationship between media exposure, educational background, and race-related beliefs and attitudes was examined among a probability sample of white college students. Perceptions about the socioeconomic outcomes of blacks relative to whites, judgments of the degree of fairness or equity existing in interracial relations, and attitudes associated with symbolic racism were found to be related to both educational factors and media exposure.

Education and Racial Perceptions

The two education-related variables with the strongest impact overall were taking a course dealing with racial issues and residence in a fraternity or sorority. Educational variables were more strongly related to symbolic racism and fairness beliefs than to strictly socioeconomic judgments.

The beliefs and attitudes reported by white students who had taken race-related course content seemed to reflect a lesser tendency toward symbolic racism than existed among other students. Specifically, the former gave lower estimates of the proportion of blacks on welfare and of the average income of black college graduates (implying inequitable outcomes), and were more likely to agree that anti-black job discrimination was still a serious problem.

In contrast, fraternity/sorority residents were more likely than other students to profess beliefs and attitudes consistent with symbolic racism. Residence in a fraternity or sorority predicted higher estimates of the average income of black college graduates (implying fair treatment of qualified blacks), agreement that job discrimination against whites is a serious problem, and opposition to proposals to set aside spaces for qualified black students or faculty.

The only belief about a strictly socioeconomic outcome that was associated with these educational factors involved estimates of the percentage of blacks who are college graduates. Exposure to a college course dealing with race was associated with higher estimates of the percentage of blacks with college degrees, while living in a fraternity or sorority was associated with lower estimates. This may be a reflection of more general pro- or anti-black affect, or alternatively it may result from the operation of the cognitive heuristic of availability (Kahneman, Slovic, & Tversky, 1982).[6]

Television Effects

Exposure to both news and non-news content influenced race-related beliefs and attitudes, but different media genres appeared to influence racial perceptions in different ways (cf., Armstrong and Neuendorf, 1989).

Socioeconomic beliefs.

TV news exposure tended to influence a different set of socioeconomic racial perceptions than exposure to non-news TV content. Beliefs concerning average black family income, percentage of black Americans who are college educated, and percentage of blacks having professional and managerial occupations were influenced mainly by _non-news_ content. Of these perceptions, general TV fictional entertainment exposure best predicted the first, while the latter two variables were predicted by exposure specifically to programs featuring black stars and co-stars. Consistent with expectations, exposure to fictional TV fare was in each case associated with a belief that black Americans are relatively _better_ off.

In contrast, beliefs about unemployment and poverty rates were predicted best by TV _news_ exposure. Moreover, these beliefs appeared to be influenced differently by exposure to local TV news and public affairs TV than by exposure to national network news. As hypothesized, exposure to local news and to public affairs programs was associated with beliefs that blacks were relatively _worse_ off: that higher percentages were unemployed or living in poverty. However, controlling for exposure to local news and TV public affairs viewing, national network news exposure was actually associated with a more _favorable_ view of black outcomes.

The association of fictional entertainment exposure with a more favorable picture of black outcomes and of local TV news exposure with more negative perceptions replicates the results of Armstrong and Neuendorf's (1989) study of college students in 1980 and 1985-86, which is cause for greater confidence in these findings. However, the finding that non-news exposure largely predicted perceptions about positive socioeconomic outcomes (income, college graduation, etc.) while news exposure influenced mainly beliefs about highly negative outcomes (poverty, unemployment) is new, as is the apparent divergence between local and network news in direction of influence.

Symbolic racism.

The construct of "symbolic racism" posits a complex of beliefs and attitudes which include opposition to measures to improve the lot of minorities, an assertion that discrimination is no longer a problem limiting the advancement of minorities, and the association of minorities with physical threats or with threats to cherished (protestant-ethic) values. In this survey, the variables most closely associated with the construct of symbolic racism were beliefs about the proportion of blacks on welfare, black crime, job discrimination, and support for affirmative action (specifically, setting aside student or faculty slots at the university for qualified blacks).

The perceived proportion of black women on welfare was one of the few variables predicted by both news exposure and exposure to non-news TV. Exposure to fictional programs featuring blacks was associated with lower estimates of the percentage of blacks dependent on the welfare system, while exposure to news-related public affairs programs predicted higher estimates.

As hypothesized, exposure to fictional TV entertainment predicted the belief that blacks represent a smaller percentage of people arrested for violent crimes. However, in contrast to predictions made by Entman (1990), answers to this question were unaffected by TV news exposure. This lack of TV news impact is indeed rather surprising in view of the amount of race-related crime content in local news, and may be an indirect result of information-processing strategies of news consumers, who may make cognitive adjustments as a result of a perception that news events, while true, are likely to be unrepresentative (cf., Graber 1986). It may also reflect a relatively lower salience of race-related crime news in the local news mix of the communities from which the majority of our sample came than is typical in big-city environments.

In contrast, TV news and TV non-news content appeared to have the same type of influence on beliefs about the present seriousness of anti-black job discrimination. Exposure to programs featuring black stars or co-stars and exposure to local TV news were both associated with a tendency to reject the notion that serious discrimination still exists.

Media exposure variables had much less of an impact on the single policy item of support for affirmative action than on other racial beliefs. Respectable zero-order correlations relating TV exposure measures to level of support for affirmative action were reduced to trivial proportions in the regression analysis. What small impact was revealed suggested lower support for the affirmative action policies among those who were more heavily exposed to non-news TV, particularly programs featuring blacks. This may be an indirect result of the influence of fictional entertainment and black TV on perceptions of black material outcomes, which do seem to be related to support for or opposition to affirmative action measures. Not surprisingly, beliefs that blacks are relatively better off, that anti-black job discrimination no longer exists, and that anti-white discrimination does exist, were associated in our sample with opposition to affirmative action.

The argument advanced by Entman (1990) that images of blacks in local TV news may stimulate or reinforce beliefs and attitudes associated with symbolic (or "modern") racism was thus only partially supported. Local TV news viewing evidently failed to create a stronger mental association between blacks and violent crime, and was only weakly associated with a belief that blacks no longer face serious job discrimination. Where local news did seem to have an influence was on perceptions about the proportion of blacks who are outside the economic mainstream: unemployed or in poverty. However, the negative outcome most clearly related to the construct of symbolic racism -- percentage of blacks on welfare -- was predicted by exposure to news-related public affairs programs but not local TV news.

The results also suggest that formal education at the college level has some potential for influencing race-related beliefs and attitudes, although such effects do not seem to be a result simply of attending college for a certain amount of time. The most important educational-related predictors were not level at the university, but rather having taken at least one class that dealt specifically with racial or ethnic issues or residing in a fraternity or sorority. Of course, we should be particularly cautious here about the direction of causality. Students who take courses in which racial or ethnic issues are formally addressed as part of the coursework may differ initially from those who fail to take such courses. The same caveat applies to the finding that residence in a fraternity or sorority was associated with more anti-black positions.

The question of causal direction is also necessarily at issue in interpreting the results relating to media exposure, although there is reason to be somewhat more willing to entertain causal hypotheses involving the media variables. The complex set of relationships between particular media exposure measures and particular social perceptions make generally excellent sense as a reflection of media content characteristics. The focus on educated, upper-middle class professionals in 1980's network programs featuring blacks (Gandy & Matabane, 1989) suggests a straightforward explanation for the correlated perceptions that blacks are wealthier, more likely to be college-educated, and more likely to be professionals. Similarly, the associations of local TV news and public affairs exposure with beliefs in more serious problems of black unemployment, welfare, and poverty are readily interpretable with respect to common themes of race-related coverage in local news and documentary reports.

The reasons why a prior belief in more positive black socioeconomic outcomes would lead to increased fictional TV exposure (even exposure to TV blacks), or why prior belief in more negative black outcomes would motivate greater local news exposure, are less obvious.

This study lends additional support to the assertion that both TV news and entertainment content can influence race related social perceptions, and that such social perceptions may themselves be related to policy positions. News and fiction exposure apparently influence different aspects of racial perceptions, and often appear to influence perceptions in opposite directions. If race-related beliefs are indeed inculcated in white viewers through exposure to television, different genres would appear to be cultivating very different sets of beliefs.

References

Armstrong, G.B. & Neuendorf, K.A. (1989: August). *TV entertainment, news, and racial perceptions of college students*. Paper presented to the Communication Theory and Methodology Division at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, DC.

Baptista-Fernandez, P. & Greenberg, B.S. (1980). The content, characteristics, and communication behaviors of blacks on television. In B.S. Greenberg (Ed.), *Life on television*. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Bobo, L. (1983). Whites' opposition to busing: Symbolic racism or realistic group conflict. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *45*(6), 1196-1210.

Bobo, L. & Licari, F.C. (1989). Education and political tolerance. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *53*(3), 285-308.

Cohen, J. & Cohen, P. (1983). *Applied multiple regression/correlation analysis for the behavior sciences (2nd Edition)*. Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Entman, R.M. (1990). Modern racism and the images of blacks in local television news. *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, *7*(4), 332-345.

Entman, R.M. (1991, May). *Blacks in the news: Television, modern racism and cultural change*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the International Communication Association, Chicago IL.

Gandy, O.H., & Matabane, P.W. (1989). Television and social perceptions among African-Americans and Hispanics. In M.K. Asante & W.B. Gudykunst (Eds.), *Handbook of international and intercultural communication* (pp. 318-348). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1980). The "mainstreaming" of America: Violence profile no. 11. Journal of Communication, 30(3), 10-29.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), Perspectives on media effects (pp. 17-40). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Giles, M.W. & Evans, A. (1986). The power approach to intergroup hostility. Journal of Conflict Resolution, 30(3), 469-486.

Graber, D.A. (1986). Processing the news: How people tame the information tide (2nd ed.). New York: Longman.

Gray, H. (1986). Television and the new Black man: Black images in prime time situation comedy. Media Culture and Society, 8, 223-242.

Gray, H. (1987). Race relations as news: content analysis. American Behavioral Scientist, 30, 381-396.

Gray, H. (1989). Television, black Americans, and the American dream. Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 6, 376-386.

Greeley, A.M. & Sheatsley, P.B. (1974). Attitudes toward racial integration. In L. Rainwater (Ed.), Social problems and public policy: Inequality and justice (pp. 241-250). Chicago: Aldine.

Greenberg, B.S. (1986) Minorities and the mass media. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), Perspectives on media effects (pp. 165-188). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Greenberg, B.S. (1988). Some uncommon television images and the drench hypothesis. In S. Oscamp (Ed.), Television as a social issue (pp. 88-102). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Greenberg, B.S. & Atkin, C.K. (1982). Learning about minorities from television. In G.L. Berry and C. Mitchell-Kernan (Eds.), *Television and the socialization of the minority child*. New York: Academic Press.

Greenberg, J. & Pyszczynski, T. (1985). The effect of an overheard ethnic slur on evaluations of the target: How to spread a social disease. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *21*, 61-72.

Groskind, F. (1989). The ideological sources of public opinion on public assistance to the poor (Doctoral dissertation, University of Michigan, 1988). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, *49*/12A, 3870.

Gurr, T.R. (1970). *Why men rebel*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Hawkins, R.P, & Pingree, S. (1982). Television's influence on social reality. In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet, & J. Lazar (Eds.), *Television and behavior: Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the eighties* (Vol. II: Technical Reviews; pp. 224-247). Washington DC: NIMH.

Hawkins, R.P., & Pingree, S. (1981). Uniform messages and habitual viewing: Unnecessary assumptions in social reality effects. *Human Communication Research*, *7*(4), 291-301.$$

Hawkins, R.P., Pingree, S., & Adler, I. (1987) Searching for cognitive processes in the cultivation effect: Adult and adolescent samples in the United States and Australia. *Human Communication Research*, *13*(4), 553-577.$$

Hayes-Roth, B. & Hayes-Roth, F. (1977). Concept learning and the recognition and classification of exemplars. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, *16*, 321-338.

Jackman, M.R. & Crane, M. (1986). "Some of my best friends are black...": Interracial friendship and whites' racial attitudes. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *50*(4), 459-486.

Jackman, M.R. & Muha, M.J. (1984). Education and intergroup attitudes: Moral enlightenment, superficial democratic commitment, or ideological refinement? *American Sociological Review*, *49*, 751-769.

Kahneman, D., Slovic, P., & Tversky, A. (Eds.). (1982). *Judgment under uncertainty: Heuristics and biases*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kerner, O. (1968). *Report of the national advisory commission on civil disorders*. New York: Bantam.

Matabane, P.W. (1988). Television and the black audience: Cultivating moderate perspectives. *Journal of Communication*, *38*(4), 21-31.

McClendon, M.J. (1985). Racism, rational choice, and white opposition to racial change: A case study of busing. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, *49*, 214-233.

McConahay, J.B. (1986). Modern racism, ambivalence, and the modern racism scale. In J.F. Dovidio and S.L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination, and racism* (pp. 91-125). New York: Academic Press.

McConahay, J.B. & Hough, J.C. Jr. (1976). *Symbolic racism. Journal of Social Issues*, *32*(2), 23-45.

Messick, D.M. & Cook, K.S. (Eds.) (1983). *Equity theory: Psychological and sociological perspectives*. New York: Praeger.

Meyrowitz, J. (1985). *No sense of place: The impact of electronic media on social behavior*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Miller, M.C. (1986). *Deride and conquer*. In T. Gitlin (Ed.), Watching television. New York: Pantheon.

Monge, P.R. (1980). Multivariate multiple regression in communication research. In Monge, P.R & Cappella, J. (Eds.), *Multivariate techniques in communication research*. New York: Academic Press.

Mosteller, F. & Tukey, J.W. (1977). *Data analysis and regression: A second course in statistics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Oberschall, A. (1973). *Social conflict and social movements*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Potter, W.J. & Chang, I.C. (1990). Television exposure measures and the cultivation hypothesis. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *34*(3), 313-333.

Sears, D.O. & McConahay, J.B. (1973). *The politics of violence: The new urban blacks and the Watts riot*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

Signorielli, N. (1986). Selective television viewing: A limited possibility. *Journal of Communication*, *36*(3), 64-76.

Sniderman, P.M., Brody, R.A. & Kuklinski, J.H. (1984). Policy reasoning and political values: The problem of racial equality. *American Journal of Political Science*, *28*, 75-94.

Stephan, W.G. & Rosenfield, D. (1978). Effects of desegregation on racial attitudes. *Journal of Social Psychology*, *2*, 291-305.

Stroman, C.A., Merritt, B., & Matabane, P. (1988, May). *Twenty years later: The portrayal of blacks on prime-time television*. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Portland, OR.

Taylor, D.M. & Moghaddam, F.M. (1987). *Theories of intergroup relations: International social psychological perspectives*. New York: Praeger.

U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (1979). *Window dressing on the set: An update*. U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, National Institute of Education. [ERIC Document ED166336].

van Dijk, T.A. (1985). When majorities talk about minorities. In M. McLaughlin (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 9* (57-82). Beverly Hills: Sage.

van Dijk, T.A. (1987). *Communicating racism: Ethnic prejudice in thought and talk*. Newbury Park: Sage.

Volgy, T.J. & Schwarz, J.E. (1980). TV entertainment programming and sociopolitical attitudes. Journalism Quarterly, 57(1), 150-155.

Walster, E., Walster, G.W., & Berscheid, E. (1978). Equity: Theory and research. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

1. This model also assumes that consistency and relevance of content are important influences on the degree to which viewing will affect social perceptions, and that an individual's social beliefs will be influenced to a lesser degree the more prior information he or she has about a given topic. An alternative effects model is Greenberg's (1988) "drench hypothesis," which posits especially strong effects on social perceptions for some subset of particularly salient media role models: "Some characters in some series, or miniseries, or single programs may be so forceful as to account for a significant portion of the images we maintain (p. 97)."

The school of thought concerning effects of television on perceptions of social reality associated with George Gerbner and "cultivation" research asserts that the shaping of social perceptions results from exposure to a body of media content that communicates an internally consistent and generally homogeneous picture of the social world, with different media genres making complementary contributions (Signorielli, 1986; cf., Hawkins & Pingree, 1981). This view implies then that patterns of individual exposure to different types of content are less important to the formation of social beliefs than is sheer volume of exposure overall. While this may be true of some aspects of TV content, the uniform messages assumption would not appear to apply well to the sorts of race-related content that are the focus of the present study. The messages about racial relations communicated in different types or genres of media content often differ from one another in systematic ways, while being relatively consistent internally. As a result, different media diets may be associated with the "cultivation" of different sorts of beliefs (Armstrong & Neuendorf, 1989; cf., Potter & Chang, 1990). Thus, although the present research shares with the cultivation approach the assumption of a cumulative effects model of media influence, it differs in assuming that it is long-term exposure to particular types or genres of content that gradually contributes to the shaping of perceived social reality.

2. It should be noted, however, that real poverty and deprivation was not a theme of even the 1970's black situation comedy genre. The 1970's vintage image has remained important, due to the popularity of this program sub-genre in syndication, and its importance in the early viewing experiences of the present college-aged population.

3. SPSS was used to generate a random selection of student directory pages and column numbers from which respondents were selected (there were four columns of addresses/phone numbers per page). For each column separately, starting numbers indicating how far down from the top of the column the first name and phone number was to be selected were also generated randomly. Additional selections from the same column on subsequent pages were determined by adding 3 spaces to the previously used listing number for that column. When the bottom of a column of names was reached, the count was continued at the top of the column. For example, the first selection was from page 2, column 1. The starting number for column 1 was 15, so the fifteenth name/phone number in that column was selected. The second selection in column 1 was from page 3. The eighteenth name/phone number in that column was selected, and so on.

4. Logarithmic transformation normalizes a positively skewed distribution by pulling extreme high scores toward the mean, and by increasing the relative distance between scores at the lower end of the distribution (thus reducing the upper tail and increasing the lower). Using least squares estimation under conditions of high positive skew typically results in non-linear and/or non-

---

normally distributed residuals (invalidating the results) and by estimates biased by extreme scores.

5. When multiple variables are included in an analysis, elimination of cases missing any independent variable can result in substantially lower power even if only small proportions of cases are missing values on any particular variable. Perhaps even more importantly, when cases with missing items are distributed nonrandomly (as is likely with survey data), their casewise elimination can have highly deleterious effects with respect to generalizability to a population, while the alternative of pairwise deletion can itself lead to highly distorted estimates (Cohen & Cohen, 1983).

6. The availability heuristic refers to the idea that we make judgments of the probability or likelihood of an event by the ease to which instances or examples come to mind. Particular examples of black college students may have been more easily accessible in memory for those white students who had taken race-oriented courses, where they are more likely to have personally encountered minority students. Conversely, fraternity and sorority residents may be less likely than others to interact with nonwhite students and may as a result underestimate their numbers.

Table 1

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Black Incomes

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.009
Respondent Sex[a]	-.157	-.089	
State of Residence	-.069	.032	
Family Income	-.069	.007	
Size Home Community	.030	-.023	
Integrated Community/School	.011	-.092	
Missing Independent Variables	.016		
Education			.11*
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	-.199*	$-.220^{**}$	
GPA	.066	-.096	
Racial/Ethnic Class	-.123	$-.175^{*}$	
Fraternity/Sorority	.078	$.163^{*}$	
All Media Exposure			.122*
TV News Exposure			.019
Network TV News	.116	.045	
Local TV News	-.017	.105	
Public Affairs Programs	-.149	$-.129^{t}$	
TV Non-News Exposure			.084**
Entertainment Exposure	.240*	$.333^{***}$	
Black Programs Viewed	.096	$.157^{*}$	
TV Sports Exposure	.150	$.181^{*}$	
Newspaper Exposure	-.115	$-.117^{t}$	

$R^2 = .265$ N = 133 F = 2.44 p = .003

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 2

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Percentage of Blacks Graduating College

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.047
Respondent Sex^{a}	$-.207^{*}$	$-.154^{*}$	
State of Residence	$-.184^{t}$	.019	
Family Income	.053	.056	
Size Home Community	$-.168^{t}$	-.120	
Integrated Community/School	-.005	.051	
Missing Independent Variables	-.012		
Education			$.136^{**}$
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	-.064	$-.173^{*}$	
GPA	-.124	$-.248^{**}$	
Racial/Ethnic Class	$.258^{**}$	$.244^{**}$	
Fraternity/Sorority	$-.159^{t}$	-.053	
All Media Exposure			$.102^{*}$
TV News Exposure			.017
Network TV News	.026	-.023	
Local TV News	-.017	.093	
Public Affairs Programs	-.151	$-.137^{t}$	
TV Non-News Exposure			$.079^{**}$
Entertainment Exposure	.133	$.180^{*}$	
Black Programs Viewed	$.230^{*}$	$.305^{***}$	
TV Sports Exposure	.100	.103	
Newspaper Exposure	-.063	.010	

$R^2 = .286$ N = 133 F = 2.71 p = .001

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001$ ^{a}"0"=female; "1"=male

Table 3

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Percentage of Blacks Having Professional/Managerial Occupations

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			$.094^{*}$
Respondent Sex[a]	$-.263^{*}$	$-.286^{***}$	
State of Residence	.050	$.114^{t}$	
Family Income	.054	.018	
Size Home Community	-.064	-.040	
Integrated Community/School	.066	.084	
Missing Independent Variables	.011		
Education			.025
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	.031	-.071	
GPA	-.076	-.104	
Racial/Ethnic Class	.050	.087	
Fraternity/Sorority	.074	.054	
All Media Exposure			.059
TV News Exposure			.007
Network TV News	-.040	$-.120^{t}$	
Local TV News	-.019	.041	
Public Affairs Programs	-.066	$-.131^{t}$	
TV Non-News Exposure			$.049^{t}$
Entertainment Exposure	-.014	.079	
Black Programs Viewed	$.258^{*}$	$.254^{**}$	
TV Sports Exposure	.008	-.040	
Newspaper Exposure	-.082	-.072	

$R^2 = .186$ N = 134 F = 1.56 p = .085

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 4

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Average Income of Black Families Headed by College Graduate

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.057
Respondent Sex[a]	-.047	-.059	
State of Residence	$.237^{*}$	$.204^{**}$	
Family Income	.001	-.006	
Size Home Community	-.046	$-.154^{*}$	
Integrated Community/School	-.027	-.096	
Missing Independent Variables	.052		
Education			$.077^{*}$
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	-.055	$-.133^{t}$	
GPA	-.018	-.063	
Racial/Ethnic Class	$-.231^{*}$	$-.156^{*}$	
Fraternity/Sorority	$.225^{*}$	$.165^{*}$	
All Media Exposure			.068
TV News Exposure			.024
Network TV News	.103	.038	
Local TV News	-.025	.093	
Public Affairs Programs	$-.180^{t}$	$-.164^{*}$	
TV Non-News Exposure			.026
Entertainment Exposure	-.162	.034	
Black Programs Viewed	.119	.073	
TV Sports Exposure	.130	$.133^{t}$	
Newspaper Exposure	.106	.094	

$R^2 = .205$ N = 134 F = 1.76 p = .043

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 5

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Black Unemployment Rate

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.054
Respondent Sex[a]	$.248^{*}$	$.183^{*}$	
State of Residence	-.014	-.081	
Family Income	.082	.062	
Size Home Community	.089	$.156^{*}$	
Integrated Community/School	.042	.063	
Missing Independent Variables	-.077		
Education			.053
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	.149	$.203^{**}$	
GPA	.096	$.129^{t}$	
Racial/Ethnic Class	-.118	-.109	
Fraternity/Sorority	-.002	.059	
All Media Exposure			$.093^{t}$
TV News Exposure			$.084^{*}$
Network TV News	$-.251^{*}$	-.000	
Local TV News	$.335^{**}$	$.130^{t}$	
Public Affairs Programs	.145	$.155^{*}$	
TV Non-News Exposure			.021
Entertainment Exposure	-.164	-.098	
Black Programs Viewed	.017	-.014	
TV Sports Exposure	-.044	.012	
Newspaper Exposure	-.011	.003	

$R^2 = .210$ N = 132 F = 1.78 p = .04

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 6

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Percentage of Blacks Living in Poverty

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.026
Respondent Sex[a]	.146	.061	
State of Residence	-.048	-.049	
Family Income	-.032	-.087	
Size Home Community	.064	.080	
Integrated Community/School	.013	.019	
Missing Independent Variables	-.101		
Education			.057
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	.066	.169*	
GPA	.077	.149*	
Racial/Ethnic Class	-.058	-.049	
Fraternity/Sorority	-.116	-.192*	
All Media Exposure			.114*
TV News Exposure			.079*
Network TV News	-.233*	-.001	
Local TV News	.280*	.104	
Public Affairs Programs	.226*	.212*	
TV Non-News Exposure			.037
Entertainment Exposure	-.163	-.183*	
Black Programs Viewed	-.023	-.040	
TV Sports Exposure	-.124	-.156*	
Newspaper Exposure	.039	.065	

$R^2 = .203$ N = 133 F = 1.72 p = .049

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 7

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Percentage of Blacks on Welfare

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			$.067^{t}$
Respondent Sex[a]	.089	$.157^{*}$	
State of Residence	.008	$-.125^{t}$	
Family Income	.075	.088	
Size Home Community	$.215^{*}$	$.214^{*}$	
Integrated Community/School	-.069	-.043	
Missing Independent Variables	.091		
Education			.044
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	.009	$.130^{t}$	
GPA	.029	.102	
Racial/Ethnic Class	$-.170^{t}$	$-.167^{*}$	
Fraternity/Sorority	-.054	-.034	
All Media Exposure			.071
TV News Exposure			.039
Network TV News	-.108	.046	
Local TV News	.106	-.004	
Public Affairs Programs	$.218^{*}$	$.204^{*}$	
TV Non-News Exposure			$.046^{t}$
Entertainment Exposure	-.094	-.078	
Black Programs Viewed	$-.209^{*}$	$-.181^{*}$	
TV Sports Exposure	.068	.044	
Newspaper Exposure	.015	.017	

$R^2 = .198$ N = 133 F = 1.69 p = .055

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 8

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Percentage of Persons Arrested for Violent Crimes Who are Black

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.036
Respondent Sex[a]	-.038	.005	
State of Residence	-.119	-.169*	
Family Income	.110	.126^{t}	
Size Home Community	.052	.080	
Integrated Community/School	-.014	.047	
Missing Independent Variables	-.032		
Education			.012
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	-.055	-.007	
GPA	-.070	.011	
Racial/Ethnic Class	-.044	.017	
Fraternity/Sorority	-.092	-.048	
All Media Exposure			.085
TV News Exposure			.025
Network TV News	-.179	-.082	
Local TV News	.030	-.099	
Public Affairs Programs	.119	.064	
TV Non-News Exposure			.054^{t}
Entertainment Exposure	-.285*	-.244*	
Black Programs Viewed	-.013	-.070	
TV Sports Exposure	.092	-.015	
Newspaper Exposure	.087	.088	

$R^2 = .137$ N = 134 F = 1.086 p = .376

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 9

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Job Discrimination Against Whites

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.006
Respondent Sex[a]	-.019	-.049	
State of Residence	.054	.055	
Family Income	-.053	-.009	
Size Home Community	.027	.012	
Integrated Community/School	-.038	-.020	
Missing Independent Variables	.114		
Education			.069
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	.034	-.021	
GPA	-.059	-.110	
Racial/Ethnic Class	.047	.067	
Fraternity/Sorority	$.262^{**}$	$.215^{**}$	
All Media Exposure			.033
TV News Exposure			.014
Network TV News	-.074	-.003	
Local TV News	.152	$.161^{*}$	
Public Affairs Programs	.033	.013	
TV Non-News Exposure			.011
Entertainment Exposure	-.057	$.113^{t}$	
Black Programs Viewed	.123	$.133^{t}$	
TV Sports Exposure	.034	.091	
Newspaper Exposure	-.058	.011	

$R^2 = .120$ N = 134 F = .929 p = .542

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

[a] Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 10

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Perceived Job Discrimination Against Blacks

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.015
Respondent Sex^a	-.173^t	-.082	
State of Residence	-.002	-.029	
Family Income	.039	.057	
Size Home Community	.039	.066	
Integrated Community/School	.030	.020	
Missing Independent Variables	-.194*		
Education			.078*
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	-.035	.005	
GPA	.075	.159*	
Racial/Ethnic Class	.227**	.234**	
Fraternity/Sorority	-.131	-.046	
All Media Exposure			.082
TV News Exposure			.037
Network TV News	.047	-.051	
Local TV News	-.198^t	-.219**	
Public Affairs Programs	.132	.082	
TV Non-News Exposure			.038
Entertainment Exposure	.029	-.151*	
Black Programs Viewed	-.226*	-.189*	
TV Sports Exposure	.074	-.055	
Newspaper Exposure	.056	.053	

$R^2 = .220$ $N = 134$ $F = 1.92$ $p = .023$

$^t p < .10$ $^* p < .05$ $^{**} p < .01$

^{a}Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 11

Regression/Correlation Analysis Predicting Support for Affirmative Action "Quotas" at University

Predictor	Beta	r	R^2-Chg
Demographics			.062^{t}
Respondent Sex^{a}	-.101	-.130^{t}	
State of Residence	-.129	-.111	
Family Income	-.094	-.152*	
Size Home Community	.021	.035	
Integrated Community/School	.159^{t}	.174*	
Missing Independent Variables	-.162^{t}		
Education			.079*
Level (Fr/So/Jr/Sr/Grad)	-.043	.046	
GPA	-.013	.126^{t}	
Racial/Ethnic Class	.057	.072	
Fraternity/Sorority	-.249**	-.244**	
All Media Exposure			.067
TV News Exposure			.005
Network TV News	-.050	-.129^{t}	
Local TV News	-.044	-.159*	
Public Affairs Programs	.006	-.071	
TV Non-News Exposure			.044^{t}
Entertainment Exposure	-.101	-.313***	
Black Programs Viewed	-.176^{t}	-.207**	
TV Sports Exposure	-.074	-.247**	
Newspaper Exposure	.074	-.004	

$R^2 = .248$ $N = 131$ $F = 2.19$ $p = .008$

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$

^{a}Dummy variable: "0"=female; "1"=male

Table 12

Stepwise Regression and Correlation Analysis: Support for Affirmative Action "Quotas" at University Predicted by Social Perceptions Measures

Predictor	Beta	r
Perceived Black Family Income	$-.183^{*}$	$-.288^{***}$
Perceived Black College Grad Income	$-.299^{***}$	$-.346^{***}$
Perceived Percent Blacks on Welfare	$-.166^{t}$	-.008
Perceived Percent Black College Grads		.058
Perceived Percent Black Professionals		$-.124^{t}$
Perceived Black Unemployment Rate		.067
Perceived Percent Blacks in Poverty		$.134^{t}$
Perceived Percent Black Violent Criminals		.038

$R^2 = .152$ N = 131 F = 7.64 p = .000

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001$

Table 12

Stepwise Regression and Correlation Analysis: Support for Affirmative Action "Quotas" at University Predicted by Social Perceptions Measures and Beliefs about Job Discrimination

Predictor	Beta	r
Perceived Anti-Black Job Bias	$.307^{***}$	$.438^{***}$
Perceived Anti-White Job Bias	$-.173^{*}$	$-.317^{***}$
Perceived Black Family Income		$-.288^{***}$
Perceived Black College Grad Income	$-.186^{*}$	$-.346^{***}$
Perceived Percent Blacks on Welfare		$-.008$
Perceived Percent Black College Grads		$.058$
Perceived Percent Black Professionals		$-.124^{t}$
Perceived Black Unemployment Rate		$.067$
Perceived Percent Blacks in Poverty		$.134^{t}$
Perceived Percent Black Violent Criminals		$.038$

$R^2 = .252$ N = 131 F = 14.28 p = .000

$^{t}p < .10$ $^{*}p < .05$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001$

Television Reality and Experience in Constructing Social and Personal Estimates of Risk[1]

Michael A. Shapiro
Cornell University
Department of Communication
319 Kennedy Hall
Ithaca, NY 14853-4203
(607) 255-6356
BITNET:MIK@CORNELLA

Paper presented to the Theory and Methodology Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, August, 1991

July 22, 1991

Abstract

Adult respondents' judgments about the reality of risk topics on television significantly predicted judgments about the likelihood of three of four risks in the general society. However, television variables had little impact on judgments of personal risk. There, experience with the risk and the perceived relevance of the risk were more important predictors. The data supports the impersonal impact hypothesis and undermines the notion that television is a unified, homogeneous experience for adults.

Television Reality and Experience in Constructing Social and Personal Estimates of Risk

Most people have limited direct exposure to most risks encountered in the world. Few are crime victims, most are relatively healthy, few have much exposure to drug addiction. Even a divorced person knows that his or her divorce is not necessarily typical of all divorces. Yet, somehow, we form a picture of what these risks are like for most people and can estimate our own risk--however accurately. In part, that picture may come from information and images in the mass media, including television.

But how does television influence these risk judgments? First, there is considerable evidence that television viewers give greater weight to some television experiences than to others (for recent examples, see Potter & Chang, 1990; Shapiro, 1991). Many investigators have looked at the possibility that television perceived as realistic is more likely to influence social-reality judgments than television perceived as less realistic (for a recent review, see Potter, 1986). In addition, television may have more influence on judgments about the incidence of a risk in society in general (the base rate) but less influence on an individual's estimate of his or her own risk (Tyler & Cook, 1984). This is sometimes called the "impersonal impact hypothesis."

The current study has several goals. First, it is intended to overcome some of the shortcomings in previous perceived reality studies. Second, it focuses on the effect of perceived reality on adult judgments rather than children's judgments.

Finally, it looks at the possibility that perceived reality judgments may only influence base-rate judgments and not estimates of personal risk.

Perceived Reality

In general, the idea is that events that viewers perceive as realistic are more likely to influence social-reality judgments than events that seem less realistic. Typically, perceived reality has been looked at in one of three ways.

- A between subjects experimental manipulation in which some subjects (usually children or adolescents) are told that the stimulus is real and others are told the stimulus is not real (i.e., just actors) (for example, Atkin, 1983; Feshbach, 1972)
- The perceived reality of the characters on entertainment television (for example, Greenberg & Reeves, 1976)
- The overall perceived reality of television, in general, or a particular type of programming, i.e., TV news (for example, Reeves, 1978; Perse, 1988; Rubin, Perse & Taylor, 1988).

There are several gaps in this program of research. First, little research has focused on the role of perceived reality in adult judgments about social reality. Given the policy implications, the focus on children's developing ability to make judgments about television reality is understandable. However, adults should be able to make even finer distinctions about television reality than children. One possibility is that reality judgments influence how much weight an adult gives a television experience in constructing social reality.

Another shortcoming is that most studies measure perceptions of the overall reality of television. In addition, most studies have focused on the reality of a limited number of topics--most frequently crime or violence. However, adults (and probably children) probably make relatively fine distinctions about television reality. For example, viewers may perceive the presentation of some topics on television as more realistic than the presentation of other topics. Also, a television documentary about the children of divorce is not the same as a situation comedy that includes children of divorced parents. On the other hand, while entertainment television may seem less real than a documentary to most people, entertainment can still contain information that resembles real life both cognitively and emotionally (Shapiro & Lang, 1991).

In fact, there is considerable evidence that people do make distinctions about television content based on program type, program content, and topic and that these distinctions influence social reality judgments (Adoni, Cohen & Mane, 1984; Bryant, Carveth & Brown, 1981; Cohen, Adoni & Drori, 1983; Hawkins & Pingree, 1981; Potter & Chang, 1990; Reep & Dambrot, 1989; Slater & Elliott, 1982; Weaver & Wakshlag, 1986; Zemach & Cohen, 1986).

As a result, the current study asks respondents to rate perceived reality for a specific topic as presented on a specific type of television program (genre). Since a central assumption here is that viewers make perceived reality distinctions between various genre and topics, the first two hypotheses test that assumption.

Hypothesis 1: The perceived reality of a risk will vary from risk to risk within a particular television genre.

Hypothesis 2: The perceived reality of a risk topic will vary between television genre.

Dimensions of perceived reality. Several studies have concluded that perceived reality is multidimensional (Potter, 1988; Hawkins, 1977; Reeves, 1978). Although both two and three dimensional schemes have been suggested, most recent studies have used three dimensions similar to those Potter (Potter, 1986) found using college and high school students: magic window--degree to which a person believes that television is a magic window to ongoing real events; instruction--degree to which a viewer believes that television can augment their direct experiences, and identity--degree of similarity the viewer perceives between television characters and situations and characters and situations in real life. Since magic window reality seems most important to children, the current study focuses on the instruction and identity dimensions of perceived reality.

Perceived-reality and social-reality. Several studies of adults and/or adolescents have found that people who think crime is realistically depicted on television feel less safe (O'Keefe, 1984; Rubin, Perse & Taylor, 1988; Slater & Elliott, 1982). These studies include some that looked at television entertainment, at television news, at both and some that made no distinction. But another study found that perceived realism of local news was not directly related to social-reality judgments about crime and victimization (Perse, 1988).

Potter (Potter, 1986) concludes that, for high school and college students, general measures of television's perceived-reality were usually better predictors of estimates of the amount of crime, violence and several causes of death in the general society than was television viewing. However, in many cases, only the interaction term was significant. Most often, the relationship between television viewing and estimates of risk for the society were only significant for those low in identity and instruction perceived reality.

In these studies, however, perceived reality was almost always measured as a relatively general characteristic of television. A few studies look at perceived reality of a specific topic, but that topic is always crime. However, as mentioned earlier, adults probably perceive the depiction of some topics as more realistic than other topics on television. Moreover, they probably see some types of programs as more realistic than others.

That doesn't mean that those programs seen as the most realistic will necessarily have the greatest effect on risk estimates. News is almost certainly perceived as being more real than fiction. But news viewers may be more likely to think about the likelihood of an event while watching that event. If a viewer understands that television news is more likely to report rare events, that may reduce the chances that news viewing will influence risk estimates. Entertainment viewers, on the other hand, seem unlikely to think as much about event probabilities. That may make them more likely to be influenced. In addition, perceived reality may be more likely to influence risk estimates for some topics than for others. Thus, it seems wise to be as specific as possible about topic and genre when measuring perceived reality and its effects.

Also, most studies measure the relationship between television perceived reality and feelings of personal safety. But considerable evidence indicates that television is not very likely to influence personal risk judgments.

Impersonal Impact of Television

In the recent risk-perception literature, considerable attention has focused on the difference between a person's judgments about the incidence of a particular risk in society in general (the base rate) and a person's estimate of his or her own susceptibility to that risk (personal risk). Mass media reports seem to influence base rate judgments but not personal risk judgments (Tyler & Cook, 1984). This is sometimes called the "impersonal impact hypothesis."

Personal experience seems to have the most effect on personal risk judgments about crime (O'Keefe, 1984; Tyler, 1980). In addition, Tyler found that the "informativeness" of a particular source of information was an important mediator of the information source's influence on base-rate and personal-risk judgments about crime. Specifically, informativeness had more of a mediating effect between direct experience and events heard about from others and personal-risk judgments than on base-rate judgments. But when looking at the influence mass media events had on risk judgments, informativeness only mediated base-rate judgments.

One possibility is that judgments about the perceived reality of television have a similar impersonal impact. That is, perceived reality will influence base-rate judgments but not personal-risk judgments. On the other hand, experience and the perceived relevance of a risk are expected to influence personal-risk judgments but, perhaps, not influence base-rate judgments.

Hypothesis 3a:	The perceived reality of a risk as depicted on television will be a significant predictor of a person's estimate of the base rate for that risk.
Hypothesis 3b:	The perceived reality of a risk as depicted on television will not be a significant predictor of a person's estimate of his or her personal risk.
Hypothesis 4a:	Experience with a risk and the perceived relevance of that risk will not be a significant predictor of a person's estimate of the base rate for that risk.
Hypothesis 4b:	Experience with a risk and the perceived relevance of that risk will be a significant predictor of a person's estimate of his or her personal risk.

Methods

Subjects

Respondents were 365 persons asked to fill out a short questionnaire at a local shopping mall outside a small New York college town. The respondents were offered a coupon for a free ice cream or frozen yogurt as an incentive. Most people took about 15 minutes to answer the questions. To control for possible order effects, half the respondents were asked the media use and media-perceptions questions first, and half were asked the social-reality questions first.

About 58 percent of the volunteers were female, 42 percent male. While ages ranged from 18 to 80, most respondents were young with an average age about 29. The group was generally highly educated, averaging two or three years of college. About 87 percent were Caucasian. Median household income was between $40,000 and $50,000. The median on a political conservatism scale was somewhat liberal. They averaged about 20 total hours of television viewing each week.

Selection of Topics

Many of the questions asked respondents to make judgments about five risk topics: divorce, serious illness, drug addiction, alcoholism and violent crime. These topics were purposely chosen because they were all likely to be topics depicted at least fairly frequently on both entertainment television and television news. Although the topics probably vary in how media-dependant people are for information about the topic, people are likely to be at least partly media-dependent while having at least some personal experience with the topic.

Measures of Television Use and Television Perceptions

Television exposure. Respondents were given a list of types of television shows and asked how many hours they watched each type during a typical week. In addition, they were asked how many hours they watched television news and television entertainment each day of the week. All items were converted to z-scores to standardize scales. These items were used to form two scales, a five-item television entertainment scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .83) and a three-item television news scale (alpha = .64).

Topic attention. Using a 7 interval semantic-differential scale, respondents were asked to rate the 5 topics on how much attention they paid to that topic on entertainment television and how much attention they paid to that topic on television news. However, the correlations between ratings of drug abuse and alcoholism were so high, those two topics were combined in this and all other measurements.

Identity perceived reality. To assess identity perceived reality, respondents were asked to rate the five topics on a seven interval semantic-differential scale from "just like real life" to "not at all like real life." Respondents were asked to do this for both the presentation of events and the presentation of people on both entertainment television and television news/documentaries. Separate scales were developed for each topic for each medium, combining drug abuse and alcoholism as before. The result was eight identity perceived-reality scales (four topics, each for two media). The two drug/alcohol scales had four items each (Entertainment alpha = .88; News alpha = .83). The scales for the other three topics consisted of two items each (events, people) with correlations between the two items ranging from 0.64 to 0.69).

Instruction perceived reality. Using a 7 interval semantic- differential scale, respondents were asked to rate the 5 topics on how much a person can learn about that topic. Separate ratings were requested for entertainment television and for television news. Again, ratings for drug abuse and alcoholism were combined.

Topic relevance . Respondents were asked to rate "how relevant each topic is to your life" and "how important each topic is to you." The two items were combined to form a relevance scale for each topic. Correlations ranged from .55 to .64. Four items were used to form the drug/alcohol scale (alpha = .86).

Topic experience. Each respondent was asked to indicate how much direct experience he or she had with each topic. In addition, he or she was asked to indicate how much direct experience close friends and family had with that topic. The two items were combined to form a personal experience scale for each topic. Correlations ranged from .56 to .64. A four-item drug/alcohol scale had an alpha of .83.

Measures of Risk Perception

Base rate risk. Respondents were asked to estimate as a percentage the likelihood of each risk in the general population and in particular situations.[2] From these questions, four scales were formed (divorce, 4 items, alpha = .86; illness, 3 items, alpha = .88; drug addiction/alcoholism, 8 items, alpha = .94; crime, 7 items, alpha = .85).

Personal risk. The measure of personal risk was based on an unrealistic optimism scale used by Weinstein (Weinstein, 1980). Each respondent was asked to indicate the chances of each risk happening to him or her on a 7-interval scale ranging from much below average to much above average. To do this, respondents were asked to compare themselves to other same age, same sex people who lived near them. They were asked about each risk twice, and the two items were combined. Correlations ranged from .55 to .73. Drug abuse and alcoholism were combined to form a four-item scale (alpha = .88).

Results

Hypotheses 1 and 2

A topics (the four risk topics) X medium (TV Entertainment, TV News) within subjects analysis of variance was used to test these hypotheses. The dependent variable in one analysis was subjects' perceptions of identity perceived reality. The dependent variable in another analysis was subjects' perceptions of instruction perceived reality.

In both analyses there was a significant main effect for medium (identity $F(1, 330) = 437.0$; $p < .001$; instruction $F(1,345) = 316.6$; $p < .001$). In both cases, television news was perceived as significantly more real than television entertainment (see Table 1 for means). Hypothesis 1 was supported.

Insert Table 1 about here

The analysis of instruction perceived reality showed a significant main effect for topic (F(3,1035) = 74.0; p < .001), but there was no main effect for topic in the identity analysis.

A series of paired T-tests was performed comparing the various topics on instruction perceived reality. Four of the six possible pairwise comparisons for entertainment television were significant at p < .001. The comparison between drugs and crime was significant at p < .05. The comparison between illness and crime was not significant at the usual alpha < .05. For topics on television news, four of the six topic comparisons were significant at p < .001. The other two comparisons were also significant (illness-drugs, p < .01; drugs-crime, p < .05), but using the Bonferroni procedure to control for experimentwise error, comparisons with p greater than .001 should be considered questionable.

Both analyses indicated a significant medium X topic interaction. This indicates that the difference between entertainment and news is larger for some topics than others. This is of little theoretical interest here.

Based on the above analysis, hypothesis 2 is supported for instruction perceived reality, but not for identity perceived reality.

Hypotheses 3 and 4

Eight multiple regression equations were used to test hypotheses 3 and 4. The dependent variable in each of the regression equations was one of the base rate or personal risk scales. Entered into the equation first were: demographics (gender, age, education, political views)[3], television exposure, and attention to the specific topic on television. Except for the demographics variables, all other measures included indicators for both entertainment television and television news (see Table 2).

Table 3 gives the partial correlations for each of the perceived reality, experience and relevance variables after controlling for demographics, television exposure and topic attention.[4] They indicate that as instruction perceived reality for entertainment television increases, base-rate estimates increase significantly for three of the four risks. For crime, as all four perceived-reality variables increase, the base-rate estimate of crime increases significantly. As identity perceived reality of divorce on entertainment television increases, base-rate estimates of divorce increase significantly.

Insert Tables 2 & 3 about here

Since at least one perceived reality variable was significantly related to base-rate risk estimates for 3 of 4 topics, Hypothesis 3a is supported.

Perceived reality seemed to have far less impact on estimates of personal risk. The only significant partial correlation indicates that the more identity perceived reality a respondent attached to the depiction of drugs/alcohol on entertainment television, the lower his or her estimate of personal risk in that area. One possible explanation is that people who don't abuse drugs or alcohol tend to see the horrors of drugs and alcohol depicted on entertainment television as realistic. Hypothesis 3b seems mostly supported. Of course, any hypotheses predicting null results must be regarded with some caution.

Experience did seem to have some effect on base-rate estimates for divorce and drugs/alcohol. Thus, support for hypothesis 4a is, at best, mixed.

However, Hypothesis 4b appears to be strongly supported. The more perceived relevance and the more personal experience, the higher the estimate of personal risk. All these partials are highly significant.

Other Results

Some other results from the simultaneous equation are worth noting. First, after controlling for all other variables, mere exposure to entertainment television has a significant unique effect on base-rate estimates of divorce and illness. Mere exposure to television news has a significant unique effect on base-rate estimates of illness and drugs/alcohol. In all these cases, the higher the exposure, the higher the base-rate estimate. However, television exposure had no unique effect on any personal risk estimates[5]

Attention to illness had a significant effect on personal-risk estimates but not on base-rate estimates. Interestingly, the effect was in the opposite direction for entertainment and news. Greater attention to illness on entertainment television was related to higher estimates of personal risk. But greater attention to illness on news was related to lower estimates of personal risk. One possibility is that news is more likely to tell people how to avoid illness, while entertainment tends to emphasize hopeless illnesses such as cancer. There were no relationships between attention and risk estimates for any of the other topics.

Not surprisingly, individual characteristics have considerable impact on risk estimates. Women gave consistently higher estimates of base-rate risk then did men, although only for crime did the women rate their personal risk significantly higher. Men rated their personal risk of drug and/or alcohol abuse higher than did women.

Compared to older respondents, young people tended to give lower base-rate estimates for drug/alcohol abuse and thought they were personally less at risk of a divorce. As respondents got older, they saw themselves at greater risk of crime and, not surprisingly, serious illness. Education had little impact on personal risk estimates, but the less educated tended to give higher base-rate estimates than those with more education. Those who rated themselves politically conservative tended to think their personal-risk of divorce was lower than those who rated themselves less conservative.

Discussion

Predicting Risk

Using measurements specific to a particular risk results in a fairly consistent pattern of results across topics. The only exception is drug/alcohol abuse in which personal experience seems to be the most important predictor for both base-rate and personal risk. Otherwise, the more real a person perceived a topic's treatment on television, the higher his or her base-rate estimates of risk tended to be for three of the four topics. But except for drugs/alcohol, experience and relevance had little impact on base-rate estimates. On the other hand, personal experience and perceived relevance had a highly significant positive relationship with estimates of personal risk. But television variables had little impact on personal risk estimates.

This result is consistent with the impersonal impact hypothesis indicating that television viewing and judgments about television content are related to people's view of a risk's likelihood in the general population but has little relationship to estimates of personal risk.

Psychological Mechanisms

The central puzzle of the impersonal impact effect is that:

> "...at the same time they resist drawing personal implications [from the mass media], respondents generalize from these atypical cases to general judgments about the population." (Tyler & Cook, 1984, p 702).

The current results indicate that perceived reality does not modify the impersonal impact effect. Tyler and Cook claim their results offer some indication that personal impact of mass media is greater for those who identified with the victim or those who said the presented material indicated ways to lessen the risk. However, the differences were not significant (Tyler & Cook, 1984, study 3).

Tyler and Cook speculate that mass media may only influence personal level judgments if the respondent identifies with the depicted problem and sees it as applying to him or herself. One related possibility is that television is most likely to impact personal risk estimates if a specific event or situation resonates emotionally or cognitively with a person's personal experience. Obviously, this kind of effect can only be measured in laboratory experiments.

However, at least two other possibilities seem worth exploring. One possibility is that television influences decision making about personal risk without changing estimates of personal risk. Considerable evidence now indicates that activating a mental construct makes it more mentally available and more likely to influence decision making (Higgins, 1989). For example, mere exposure to an attitude object can make that attitude more likely to influence a decision without changing that attitude (Fazio, 1990). Mass media can produce such activation effects (Shapiro, 1991a). Thus, television may influence decisions by activating personal-risk estimates, making them more mentally available, without changing those risk estimates.

A second possibility is that the decision processes that people use to report base rates are very different from the decision processes used to derive personal risk. Base-rate estimates may be largely determined by unconscious mechanisms that make heavy use of episodic memories (Shapiro, 1991; Shapiro & Lang, 1991). Television events are suitable raw material for these kinds of processes. Such processes are likely to be influenced by information about the "reality" of an event.

On the other hand, personal-risk judgments may be more conscious, drawing on explicit thoughts about personal lifestyle and past experiences. Thus, in order to discover the reasons for the impersonal impact effect, researchers may have to probe mental decision making procedures.

Why Entertainment TV?

Differences in mental processing strategies may also explain another interesting result. While television news depictions of these risks are clearly seen as more realistic than entertainment television depictions, it is entertainment instruction perceived reality that makes the most consistent difference in base-rate estimates.

Instruction perceived reality probably had more effect than identity perceived reality because respondents made more distinctions between topics for instruction than for identity perceived reality. But why entertainment television seems to have more effect on base-rate estimates (with the possible exception of crime) is more difficult to explain.

One possibility is that there is an interaction between belief in the teaching ability of entertainment television and the relatively low topic-involvement nature of watching entertainment television. Since messages on television news are more likely to be perceived as overtly trying to change world view, viewers are more likely to be motivated to think about and counter-argue the social-reality lessons of television news. On the other hand, entertainment viewers may be less motivated to think about the message. Some attitude change research indicates simple mental heuristics or message cues are more likely to influence attitude when people are not particularly motivated to think about messages (see Chaiken, 1980; Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). "You can learn from television about risk," may be a heuristic called on by some people while watching entertainment television. When estimating personal risk, however, a person may become more deliberative and less likely to depend on simple heuristics. Based on the current evidence, this model is clearly speculative, but, since both motivation to process messages and heuristics can be manipulated, this model is testable.[6]

Topic Differences

Also, as predicted, respondents' judgments about television reality varied between topics and between news and entertainment. This is hardly a surprise, but this fact is seldom acknowledged in the perceived reality literature. In talking about the perceived reality of television, investigators must answer the question: perceived reality of what?

This result also undermines the notion of television as a unified, homogeneous experience for most viewers. Even if--as the cultural indicators group suggests--television content presents an integrated, relatively uniform view of the world (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan & Signorielli, 1986), mentally active viewers make judgments about how closely television events parallel the real world. Even news, on average, is not judged as being a perfect reflection of the real world. Thus, the meanings people store and the judgments people make based on television are likely to include information about how closely television events correspond to the real world.

Why is This Important

The current study has both theoretical and practical implications for researchers. Understanding the psychological mechanisms involved is critical to a full understanding of television's effects on the construction of social reality (Hawkins & Pingree, 1990). The current study indicates that the psychological mediators involved may differ dramatically depending on whether a researcher is interested in effects on base-rate estimates or on personal-risk estimates. A further exploration of the reasons for these differences may reveal a great deal about the psychological mechanisms involved.

Consistent with other studies (Tyler, 1980; Tyler & Cook, 1984), there seems to be little transfer from base-rate estimates to personal-risk estimates. The correlations between the base-rate estimate and the personal-risk estimates for the same risk range from .10 to .21.

For practitioners, the results suggest that information campaign influence on base-rate estimates probably do not transfer to beliefs about personal risk. Instead, those designing information campaigns may want to concentrate on giving target audiences more experience with the risk or increasing the perceived relevance of the risk. As mentioned earlier, it may also be worthwhile to explore a campaign's ability to make a risk more mentally available and thus more likely to influence decisions.

Limitations

One limitation to generalizability here is the nature of the respondent pool. The sample was not random and the respondents were atypically young, educated and affluent. Few were heavy television watchers. Even so, the sample is more varied than the college and/or high school students used in most other perceived reality studies of adults (for example, Potter, 1986; Slater & Elliott, 1982). O'Keefe (O'Keefe, 1984) did use a national survey sample, but the focus of that study was not perceived reality. Several other studies used a broad variety of adults but not a random sample (Perse, 1988; Rubin, Perse & Taylor, 1988).[7]

A more important limitation is that the correlational nature of the study precludes strong causal inference. Impersonal impact effects have been found in less causally ambiguous experiments (Tyler & Cook, 1984; studies 1 and 3). Still, in several cases, reverse causality or reciprocal causality can't be ruled out and may even be likely. For example, high base-rate estimates of risk may cause a person to perceive television entertainment as relatively realistic. For personal-risk estimates, high estimates of personal risk may increase perceptions of relevance. However, it doesn't seem logical or likely that high estimates of personal risk cause people to have more experience with a particular risk.

Media Dependency

The topics were purposely selected to be intermediate in media dependency. Respondents were likely to be only partly dependent on the media for information, beliefs and attitudes about these topics. But it may be interesting to examine topics depicted on both television news and television entertainment about which respondents are almost entirely media dependent or to measure the media dependency of respondents for specific topics. For example, messages about foreign countries are more likely to influence social-reality judgments if a person is media dependent (Perry, 1987). One possibility is that perceived reality may influence personal risk judgments for highly media dependent topics.

This study indicates that the adults questioned made perceived-reality distinctions about a variety of risk topics as depicted on both television news and television entertainment. At least some of those perceived-reality judgments are related to estimates of the general societies risk. But, consistent with the impersonal impact hypothesis, perceived reality seemed to have little relationship to personal risk judgments.

References

Adoni, H., Cohen, A. A., & Mane, S. (1984). Social reality and television news: Perceptual dimensions of social conflicts in selected life areas. Journal of Broadcasting, 2801, 33-49.

Atkin, C. (1983). Effects of realistic TV violence vs. fictional violence on aggression. Journalism Quarterly, 60 (4), 615-621.

Bryant, J., Carveth, R., & Brown, D. (1981). Television viewing and anxiety: An experimental examination. Journal of Communication, 31 (1), 106-119.

Chaiken, S. (1980). Heuristic versus systematic information processing and the use of source versus message cues in persuasion. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39 (5), 752-766.

Cohen, A. A., Adoni, H., & Drori, G. (1983, Winter). Adolescents' perceptions of social conflicts in television news and social reality. Human Communication Research, 10 (2), 203-225.

Fazio, R. H. (1990). Multiple processes by which attitudes guide behavior: The mode model as an integrative framework. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), Advances in Experimental Social Psychology, Vol. 23 (75-109). San Diego: Academic Press.

Feshbach, S. (1972). Reality and fantasy in filmed violence. In J. D. Murray, E. A. Rubinstein, & G. A. Comstock (Ed.), Television and Social Behavior (Vol. 2) Television and Social Learning (318-345). Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office.

Fiske, S., & Taylor, S. (1984). Social Cognition. New York: Random House.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process. In J. Bryant, & D. Zillman (Ed.), Perspectives on Media Effects (17-40). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Greenberg, B. S., & Reeves, B. (1976). Children and the perceived reality of television. Journal of Social Issues, 32 (4), 86-97.

Hawkins, R. P. (1977, July). The dimensional structure of children's perceptions of television reality. Communication Research, 4 (3), 299-320.

Hawkins, R. P., & Pingree, S. (1981, Summer). Uniform messages and habitual viewing: Unnecessary assumptions in social reality effects. Human Communication Research, 7 (4), 291-301.

Hawkins, R. P., & Pingree, S. (1990). Divergent psychological processes in constructing social reality from mass media content? In N. Signorielli, & M. Morgan (Ed.), Cultivation Analysis: New Directions in Media Effects Research (35-50). Newbury Park: Sage.

Hawkins, R. P., Pingree, S., & Adler, I. (1987, Summer). Searching for cognitive processes in the cultivation effect. Adult and adolescent samples in the United States and Australia. Human Communication Research, 13 (4), 553-577.

Higgins, E. T. (1989). Knowledge accessibility and activation: Subjectivity and suffering from unconscious sources. In J. S. Uleman, & J. A. Bargh`(Ed.), Unintended Thought. New York: Guilford Press.

O'Keefe, G. J. (1984). Public views on crime: Television exposure and media credibility. In R. Bostrom (Ed.), Communication Yearbook 8 (514-535).

Perry, D. K. (1987, Summer/Autumn). The image gap, how international news affects perceptions of nations. Journalism Quarterly, 64 (2&3).

Perse, E. M. (1988). Cultivation and involvement with local television news. . Paper presented to the International Communication Association convention, New Orleans, June, 1988.

Petty, R. E., & Cacioppo, J. T. (1986). The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), Advances in Experimental Social Psychology Vol. 19 (123-205). New York: Academic Press.

Potter, W. J. (1986, Spring). Perceived reality and the cultivation hypothesis. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 30 (2), 159-174.

Potter, W. J. (1988, Winter). Three strategies for elaborating the cultivation hypothesis. Journalism Quarterly, 65 (4), 930-939.

Potter, W. J., & Chang, I. C. (1990, Summer). Television exposure measures and the cultivation hypothesis. Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media, 34 (3), 313-333.

Reep, D. C., & Dambrot, F. H. (1989, Autumn). Effects of frequent television viewing on stereotypes: 'Drip, drip' or 'drench'? Journalism Quarterly, 66 (3).

Reeves, B. (1978). Perceived TV reality as a predictor of children's social behavior. Journalism Quarterly, 55.

Rubin, A. M., Perse, E. M., & Taylor, D. S. (1988, April). A methodological examination of cultivation. Communication Research, 15 (2), 107-134.

Shapiro, M. A. (1991). Television Reality and Experience in Constructing Social and Personal Estimates of Risk. . Paper presented to the Theory and Methodology Division of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, 1991.

Shapiro, M. A. (1991). The Effect of Headlines on Attitude Activation and Agenda Setting. . Paper presented to the Information Systems Division of the International Communication Association, Chicago, May 1991 (37 pages).

Shapiro, M. A., & Lang, A. (1991, October). Making Television Reality: Unconscious Processes in the Construction of Social Reality. Communication Research, 18 (5), 683-703.

Slater, D., & Elliott, W. R. (1982). Television's influence on social reality. Quarterly Journal of Speech, 68, 69-79.

Tyler, T. R. (1980). Impact of directly and indirectly experienced events: The origin of crime-related judgments and behaviors. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39 (1), 13-28.

Tyler, T. R., & Cook, F. L. (1984). The mass media and judgments of risk: Distinguishing impact on personal and societal level judgments. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 47 (4), 693-708.

Weaver, J., & Wakshlag, J. (1986, Spring). Perceived vulnerability to crime, criminal victimization experience, and television viewing. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 30 (2), 141-158.

Weinstein, N. D. (1980). Unrealistic Optimism About Future Life Events. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 39 (5), 806-820.

Zemach, T. , & Cohen, A. A. . (1986 , Fall). Perception of gender equality on television and in social reality. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 30 (4), 427-444.

Table 1
Perceived Reality by Topic and Medium

Identity Perceived Reality

	Divorce	Illness	Drugs/ Alcohol	Crime
News	4.4 (1.5)	4.6 (1.4)	4.5 (1.5)	4.6 (1.6)
Entertainment	3.3 (1.6)	3.1 (1.5)	3.2 (1.5)	3.1 (1.7)

Instruction Perceived Reality

	Divorce	Illness	Drugs/ Alcohol	Crime
News	3.7 (1.8)	4.5 (1.7)	4.7 (1.7)	4.8 (1.7)
Entertainment	2.6 (1.7)	2.9 (1.8)	3.2 (1.9)	3.0 (2.0)

Note. N=325. Table values are means and standard deviations (in parentheses).

Table 2a

Partial Correlations Controlling for all Other Variables
Base-rate estimates

	Divorce	Illness	Drugs/ Alcohol	Crime
Gender	-.20***	-.20***	-.13*	.23***
Age	-.10	-.08	-.12*	.03
Education	-.08	-.13*	-.20***	-.16**
Political Conservatism	-.01	.07	.00	.02
TV Entertainment Exposure	.14**	.14*	.08	.11
TV News Exposure	-.04	.14*	.16**	.05
Attention to Topic on Entertainment TV	-.05	.09	.09	.04
Attention to Topic on TV News	.07	-.01	-.05	.05
R^2	.14***	.19***	.19***	.23***
N	314	314	295	303

Table 2b

Partial Correlations Controlling for all Other Variables
Personal Risk Rate Estimates

	Divorce	Illness	Drugs/ Alcohol	Crime
Gender	.06	-.04	.14*	-.12*
Age	-.23***	.18**	-.02	-.12*
Education	-.04	-.08	-.06	-.03
Political Conservatism	-.15**	.04	.01	.00
TV Entertainment Exposure	.01	.07	.03	.09
TV News Exposure	.09	.00	.09	-.05
Attention to Topic on Entertainment TV	.10	.14*	.11	.01
Attention to Topic on TV News	.01	-.16**	.02	-.04
R^2	.16***	.22***	.19***	.13***
N	316	312	301	306

* p<.05
** p<.01
*** P<.001

Table 3a
Partial Correlations Perceived Reality Variables
Controlling for Demographic, TV Exposure,
Attention and Relevance Experience
Base Rate Risk

	Divorce	Illness	Drugs/ Alcohol	Crime
Topic on Entertainment TV Identity	.12*	.07	.09	.18**
Topic on TV News Identity	.04	-.05	.01	.12*
Entertainment TV Instruction about Topic	.14*	.15**	.09	.22***
TV News Instruction about Topic	.04	.01	-.02	.17**
Experience with Topic	.14*	.05	.13*	.01
Topic Relevance	.04	.03	.05	-.01

Table 3b
Partial Correlations Relevance/Experience Variables
Controlling for Demographic TV Exposure,
Attention and Perceived Reality
Personal Risk

	Divorce	Illness	Drugs/ Alcohol	Crime
Topic on Entertainment TV Identity	.00	-.05	-.13*	.01
Topic on TV News Identity	-.07	-.02	-.10	.01
Entertainment TV Instruction about Topic	.02	-.10	-.07	-.04
TV News Instruction about Topic	-.10	.00	-.10	-.03
Experience with Topic	.20***	.33***	.33***	.20***
Topic Relevance	.12*	.31***	.19***	.23***

* p<.05
** p<.01
*** p<.001

1. I want to thank Janet Clesse, Laura Calvert, and Wyatt Gotbetter for their contribution to this research.

2. Some sample questions: What do you think the chances are that if an average person were to walk home alone at night on residential streets in New York City each night for a month that person would be the victim of a serious crime? What percentage of adult women becomes seriously ill each year? What percentage of teenagers take illegal drugs regularly? What percentage of marriages end in divorce?

3. The equations were also run with several other demographic variables including marital status, race, socio-economic status and income. Since these variables did not significantly change the results, they were left out to simplify reporting.

4. Because of the relatively high intercorrelations between the various perceived reality variables, entering all the perceived reality variables into the equation at the same time tended to obscure the effect of perceived reality rather than illuminate it. Controlling for experience/relevance had little effect on perceived reality effects and controlling for perceived reality had little impact on experience/relevance effects. To simplify presentation, Table 2 does not include these controls.

Since, in some studies, television exposure broken down by program type is a better predictor than total television viewing (for example, see Potter & Chang, 1990), the equations were also run using a block of individual program-type variables to estimate television effects. Since the pattern of results did not change, the total television entertainment scale is used here to simplify reporting.

6. Another possibility is that people literally learn information as they watch television that is later used in making risk estimates. However, an explicit test of just such a learning model in the construction of social reality failed (Hawkins, Pingree & Adler, 1987). In addition, such a learning theory doesn't explain why perceptions of entertainment television would be more influential than news. Finally, the relatively low correlation between base-rate estimates and personal-risk estimates for the same [illegible] indicate that learning transfer is probably not important here.

[illegible] third possibility is that people who believe that you can learn about risk from entertainment television are also more likely to believe that the world is a dangerous place (or, since the data is correlational, that believing the world is a dangerous place makes a person more likely to believe that he or she can learn about risk from entertainment television). There are a couple problems with this explanation. First, the study controlled for at least some third variables that could link instruction perceived reality and base-rate estimates, especially education and

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

television exposure. Second, if the explanation is correct, then why wouldn't there also be a relationship between instruction perceived reality of entertainment television and personal risk?

7. While this study may be as generalizable as most perceived reality studies, it is still worthwhile to examine the generalizability of the results. Is there is any reason to believe a different sample would change the results?.

If the goal was to estimate population parameters, there's no question that a true random sample is essential. But the issue is murkier for a study that focuses on relationships between variables, especially variables aimed at capturing psychological processes. First, groups of adults are likely to have very similar fundamental mental procedures and abilities (Fiske & Taylor, 1984)--especially for relatively automatic and unconscious processes. Is there any reason to think that does not apply here?

It's not hard to imagine that more educated people are more skeptical than the less educated. But the goal of this study is not to estimate the level of perceived reality but to look at the relationship between perceived reality and estimates of risk. Could there be a relationship between perceived reality and risk for this group but not for some other group? That's possible, but no specific reasons that would be true comes easily to mind. Moreover, the results seem robust to a variety of demographic controls. A similar analysis applies to the experience and relevance variables.

Even if it is true that the relationship between perceived reality and risk was different for other groups, at worst, this study represents part of an interaction effect. That is, this study identifies a substantial group for which the relationships in question seem to be true. The only question is whether the effect is universal or is different for some other group. At the very least, this study supports these effects for a substantial subgroup of the population. There is no particular reason to believe that the effect is that limited, but this study does not lend much support to broader generalizability either.

Adolescents' Interpretations of Male-Female Relationships In a Soap Opera

by
Kim Walsh-Childers
3049 Weimer Hall
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611-2084
(904) 392-5817

Accepted for presentation in the Theory and Methodology Division,
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference in
Boston, Massachusetts,
August 1991,

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The videotape used in this study was produced with funding from the Nancy Susan Reynolds Media Scholarship, provided by the Center for Population Options' Media Project. Special thanks to Jane Brown for comments on an earlier version of this paper.

ABSTRACT

Kim Walsh-Childers
3049 Weimer Hall
College of Journalism and Communications
University of Florida
Gainesville, FL 32611-2084
(904) 392-5817

After completing a questionnaire measuring sexual experience and attitudes toward male-female relationships, 72 13- to 18-year-olds watched a 14-minute soap opera and then answered questions about the relationships between characters. The study results showed that adolescents' sexual schemas influenced their perceptions of the relationships between characters. Schemas emphasizing sex in relationships generally were related positively to perceptions of relationships as sexual and of actions as sexually motivated.

Adolescents' Interpretations of Male-Female Relationships In a Soap Opera

Mass media researchers and specialists in adolescent sexuality alike seem to agree that adolescents see and hear a great deal about sex from the mass media and that these sexual messages probably have a negative impact on adolescent receivers. In the often-quoted recent compendium of information about adolescent sexuality -- Risking the Future -- the authors conclude that television teaches sexual irresponsibility:

> Television viewing undoubtedly affects adolescents' knowledge and attitudes in many areas, including sexuality. . . Television programming and advertising in general provide young people with lots of clues about how to be sexy, but they provide little information about how to be sexually responsible. (Hayes, 1987, p. 91)

The facts about adolescent sexuality in the United States unquestionably provide cause for concern. Each year, more than a million teenage girls experience unwanted pregnancies (Jones, et al., 1985). According to some estimates, one of every seven sexually active teenagers currently has a sexually transmitted disease, and many AIDS victims 20-29 years old (21 percent of all AIDS cases in 1987) probably contracted the disease during their teens (U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families, 1987). About 25 percent of all college women report having been raped or sexually assaulted since they were 14 years old (Koss, Gidycza, & Wisniewski, 1985), and other researchers have discovered that, among some teens at least, sexual aggression is considered acceptable under some circumstances (Goodchilds & Zellman, 1984).

Television's sexual content and effects on teens

That sexual relationships and activity often are portrayed on both network and cable television programming also is unquestionable; numerous studies have documented the increasing frequency and explicitness of sexual imagery on television (Roberts, 1982; Sherman & Dominick, 1986; Silverman, Sprafkin & Rubinstein, 1979; Greenberg, Stanley, Siemicki, et al., 1986; Greenberg, Linsangan, Soderman, et al., 1987). Those studies also have provided support for those who argue that television programs treat sexual relationships and their consequences irresponsibly. Content analyses of prime-time programs and soap operas have shown that, on television, sex is an activity primarily for young, unmarried partners in casual or uncommitted relationships (Roberts, 1982; Fernandez-Collado, Greenberg & Korzenny, 1978; Greenberg, Graef, Fernandez-Collado, et al., 1980; Greenberg, Abelman & Neuendorf, 1981; Greenberg & D'Alessio, 1985; Lowry & Towles, 1989). Sexual partners rarely use any birth control methods or take steps to protect themselves from sexually transmitted diseases; nonetheless they rarely contract STDs or experience unwanted pregnancies (Lowry & Towles, 1989; Louis Harris & Associates, 1987).

Studies also have provided evidence that watching sexy content on television may influence adolescents' beliefs about sexual attractiveness, the frequency and acceptability of sexual behaviors, and sexual pleasure (Baran, 1976; Greeson & Williams, 1986; Kenrick & Gutierres, 1980; Zillman & Bryant, in press). Only two studies have provided any evidence that watching sexual content on TV influences adolescents' own sexual behavior. Brown and Newcomer (in press) found that teenagers whose television viewing included higher percentages of "sexy" shows were more likely to have had sexual intercourse in the previous year; however, the direction of the relationship was not clear because the study did not include prior measures of television viewing. In a longitudinal study of adolescents, Peterson, Moore and Furstenberg (in press) found a significant correlation between heavy "sexy" television viewing in 1977 and initiation of intercourse by 1981, but only for boys.

One problem with most previous studies of television's portrayal of sexuality and the effects of adolescents' exposure to those portrayals is that the studies have relied on a sender-centered view of the mass media. From this perspective, media messages remain essentially uniform across program genres, audiences and viewing contexts, (Gerbner, et al., 1986; Signorielli, 1986). Thus, researchers -- adults using adult definitions of sexuality -- seem to have assumed that adolescents will understand and respond to content that adults have interpreted as sexual in essentially the same ways, despite differences in their levels of sexual knowledge and experience and differences in attitudes toward sexual relationships. This assumption rarely has been acknowledged or dealt with explicitly in the literature on television and adolescent sexuality; discussions of the possibility that teens might view sexual messages differently than adults generally has been limited to arguments that teenagers are less capable of distinguishing between television portrayals of sexuality and reality (Roberts, 1982; Rubinstein, 1981; Strasburger, 1985).

In the past decade, however, researchers' thinking about the message-audience relationship has undergone an important shift, which Dervin (1983) has characterized as a change from a view of information (mass-mediated or otherwise) as an "observer construct" to a "user construct" of information. The "user construct" defines information not as a brick to be placed by the sender into the "empty bucket" of the human mind, but rather as clay, "moved and shaped in unique ways by each perceiver" (Dervin, 1983, p. 169). Audience members are believed to actively construct their own meanings from media information -- meanings that may differ substantially from what the sender intended. This active role of the audience may help to explain the difficulty researchers have had in isolating the effects of media messages (Dervin, 1983; Dorr, 1986).

Schema influences on interpretation

This concept of receivers as actively constructing meanings from media stimuli is consistent with cognitive psychology assumptions that individuals differ in the content and organization of their knowledge of and attitudes toward any given topic and that these differences influence their ability to understand topic-related information. These sets of knowledge and beliefs, called schemas, grow both in content and complexity throughout an individual's life. They enable perceivers

> to identify stimuli quickly, "chunk" an appropriate unit, fill in information missing from the stimulus configuration, and select a strategy for obtaining further information, solving a problem or reaching a goal (Taylor & Crocker, 1981, p. 93-94).

Schema content -- including both knowledge of objective facts and subjective beliefs about a topic -- can influence the interpretation of a stimulus configuration either by directing the perceiver to look for schema-consistent information within the stimulus configuration or by providing a particular set of "default options" (Minsky, 1975) or best guesses from which the perceive may draw to fill in gaps or missing information in the stimulus configuration. If there is too much information to be processed, perceivers may, in fact, answer questions about the stimulus configuration with default options from their schemas even when the answers are available. Taylor and Crocker conclude that:

> Schemas, then, not only lead to systematic omissions in reconstructions of persons or events. . . they also lead to systematic constructions or additions to those stimulus configurations (1981, p. 104).

A number of studies of schematic processing support that conclusion (Black, Galambos & Read, 1984; Jones & Nisbett, 1971; Markus & Smith, 1981; Rice, 1980; Zadny & Gerard, 1974). Cantor and Mischel (1977) found that subjects who were told that the person about whom they read was either an introvert or an extrovert were more likely to recall mistakenly that the person performed non-presented by conceptually related behaviors. Subjects in another experiment mistakenly believed that the person they had watched had performed activities consistent with the occupation they had been told the person had (Taylor & Crocker, 1983).

Studies of selective perception of television content similarly have shown that viewers' attitudes and beliefs influence their interpretations of the actions depicted in and purposes of television programs. For instance, a number of studies of audience reactions to the popular 1970s situation comedy "All in the Family" indicated that viewers' liking for and agreement with the show's central character, a bigoted, working class man named Archie Bunker, were affected significantly by their attitudes toward blacks, alternative lifestyles and parental authority (Brigham & Giesbrecht, 1976; Surlin & Tate, 1976; Vidmar & Rokeach, 1974; Wilhoit & de Bock, 1976).

Schema complexity -- the amount of information about a particular subject and the density of the interconnections between information items -- also has been found to differ between individuals and to influence their ability to use schema-consistent and schema-inconsistent information (Fiske & Kinder, 1981; Fiske, Kinder & Larter, 1983). A recent study of college students' reactions to familiar and unfamiliar pop/rock songs also provided evidence of differences in processing by experts versus novices. Voelker & Pettey (1989) concluded that music "sophisticates" and "non-sophisticates," classified according to their scores on music participation and involvement scales, may process familiar music similarly; for unfamiliar music, however, music sophisticates may draw on their more complex schemas.

Adolescents' sexual schemas -- complexity

According to Gagnon and Simon (1973), children have less complete and less complex sexual schemas than adults, and these incomplete schemas prevent them from understanding behaviors or language as "sexual" in the same way that adults do. Although some parents may attempt to educate their children about sex, these attempts often do not include comprehensive information about the topics in which teenagers are most interested. Only 48 percent of teenagers in a recent survey said their parents had discussed sex with them by the time they were 12 years old; only about a third of all parent-child talks included information about birth control (Louis Harris, 1985; 1986). Other researchers have found that information about sex play, masturbation, intercourse, sexually transmitted diseases and contraception, topics of great concern to teenagers

(Parsons, 1981) rarely are included in parent-child discussions of the facts of life (Rothenberg, 1980), and information about the emotional aspects of sexuality and relationships is even harder for teenagers to obtain (Zellman & Goodchilds, 1983; Scales, 1977).

School sex education courses most commonly also cover facts about reproduction and coping with sexual development, but less often cover information about where to get contraceptives or how to prevent sexual abuse (Louis Harris, 1986) and virtually never provide teens with guidance about relationship building or the communication skills adolescents need to handle heterosexual relationships (Zellman & Goodchilds, 1983; Scales, 1977). Without direct sexual experience, parental training in sexual scripts or school-based sex education, children get most of their sexual information from peers or the mass media (Gagnon & Roberts, 1980; Rothenberg, 1980; Spanier, 1977; Parsons, 1981). The result is that North American teens lag at least two year behind their peers in Sweden, for instance, in developing an accurate understanding of the procreative process. Goldman and Goldman (1982) have found, for instance, that across all age groups, children from the U.S. and Canada are less likely than Swedish children to understand what, if anything, men and women can do to prevent pregnancy.

Adolescents' sexual schemas -- content

If American adolescents differ from adults and from adolescents in other countries in the completeness and complexity of their sexual schemas, they also differ from each other in the content of those schemas. Gagnon and Simon (1973) argue that American adolescents learn one of two sexual schemas -- one for males and one for females -- which are inextricably linked to their gender-role training.

> In this period (adolescence) the male and the female are being trained in essentially opposite modalities. . . The central themes for females are commitment to affect-laden relationships and to the rhetoric of romantic love. . . The male themes are more complex; there is a growing and developing commitment to sexual acts, in part for themselves and in part

> as acts as they relate to other main patterns in male gender role training -- autonomy, aggression, control, achievement, normative transgression. . . Both through masturbation and heterosexual contact, males can be commited to directly sexual activities, and, in some part, to gratification from them. Females, even when they report sexual arousal, do so in the haze of romantic as opposed to erotic illusions (1973, p. 71).

These opposing sexual schemas are manifested in gender differences in sexual behaviors, attitudes and perceptions of others. Numerous studies have shown, for instance, that boys are more likely than girls to engage in pre-coital sexual activity earlier in relationships (Collins, 1974; DeLamater & MacCorquodale, 1979; Coles & Stokes, 1985), and to initiate sexual intercourse at earlier ages and with more "casual" partners (Hofferth & Hayes, 1987; Coles & Stokes, 1985; Carns, 1973; Collins, 1974). Males also have been shown to put greater emphasis on physical gratification as a motive for sexual intercourse, while girls are more likely to view sexual intercourse as an expression of love or affection (Goldman & Goldman, 1982; Louis Harris, 1986). Goodchilds and Zellman (1984) have found that boys are more likely than girls to perceive certain behaviors (i.e. wearing "sexy" clothing, going to the date's home, tickling, looking into the date's eyes) as signals of sexual interest.

Even when they are observing interactions between strangers, males are more likely than females to perceive those interactions as signifying sexual interest. Abbey (1986) found that male participants in short conversations with previously unknown females and male observers who watched the conversations were more likely than female actors and observers to rate both male and female conversants as more seductive, promiscuous and attracted to their conversation partner. Abbey concluded that "men are more likely to perceive the world in sexual terms and to make sexual judgments than women are" (1986, p. 836).

Thus, adolescents differ from adults and from each other in the complexity, completeness and contents of their sexual schemas. Do these differences influence their interpretations of the sexual content of television programs?

Schema influences on interpretations of TV

Several previous studies, though not specifically based in schema theory, have provided evidence that comprehension, enjoyment and interpretations of sexual content vary according to adolescents' sexual maturity, gender and cultural backgrounds. In a study of adolescents' understanding of sexual innuendoes, Silverman and Sprafkin (1980) found that comprehension was positively related to physical maturity, the mother's rating of her child's sexual knowledge, social skills with adults, frequency of exposure to pornographic magazines and frequency of viewing situation comedies with numerous sexual references. Kalof (1989) found that females were more likely to describe the main female character in Michael Jackson's music video, "The Way You Make Me Feel," as vulnerable and scared or as controlled and powerful, while males were more likely to say the woman was a sexual tease or playing "hard-to-get." Finally, Brown and Schulze (1990) found that, among college students, whites were more likely than blacks and girls more likely than boys to interpret the Madonna music video "Papa Don't Preach" as being about adolescent pregnancy; identification of the theme as adolescent pregnancy was almost four times as common among white females as among black males, who were most likely to say the music video concerned the girl's relationships with her father and boyfriend.

Taken together, these studies of adolescents' reactions to television's sexual content indicate that there are important differences in adolescents' reactions to and understanding of sexual scenes. They also suggest that those differences in interpretations may be related to the complexity and content of adolescents' sexual schemas. The purpose of the study reported here was to test whether adolescents' interpretations of interactions between male and female television characters are influenced specifically by differences in their experience with sexual activity (sexual schema complexity) and/or by their attitudes toward the importance of sex in relationships (sexual schema content).

Understanding how adolescents' sexual schemas may influence their interpretations of the sexual content of television (and other media) is important for at least two reasons. First, knowing how existing schemas affect teens' processing of sexual content should help researchers predict which teenagers are most likely to be be affected by media sexual messages. And secondly, understanding how teenage viewers may construct schema-consistent meanings for sexual messages is crucial to those who may want to try to use media campaigns or programs to educate teens about sexual issues, including AIDS, unwanted pregnancy and sexual violence.

The following hypotheses concerning the influence of sexual schema complexity and content were tested:

> **Hypothesis 1**: Sexually experienced adolescents will be more likely than sexually inexperienced adolescents to perceive male-female interactions depicted or discussed in a television program as indicative of sexual relationships or sexual motivations.
>
> **Hypothesis 2**: Males will be more likely than females to view male-female interactions in a television program as indicative of sexual relationships or sexual motivations.
>
> **Hypothesis 3**: Regardless of gender, the greater the emphasis on sex in an individual's relationship schema, the more likely he or she will be to perceive male-female interactions depicted or discussed in a television program as indicative of sexual relationships or sexual motivations.

Both theory and research suggest that regular television viewers and particularly those familiar with specific genres are better able to perceive and process cues that television producers use to imply that characters have certain characteristics or relationships with others (Allen, 1985). These arguments led to the following hypothesis about the influence of television code knowledge on perceptions of character relationships:

> **Hypothesis 4**: Participants who spend more time watching television in general and soap operas in particular will be more likely to perceive male-female interactions in a television program as indicative of sexual relationships or sexual motivations.

Methods

Study participants and procedures

The participants were 36 white girls and 36 white boys 13-18 years old. The average age of the participants was 15.04 years. Boys were slightly older than girls (15.22 years compared to 14.86 years), but the difference was not statistically significant. Participants were recruited through personal contacts, fliers and newspaper advertisements and paid $6 for their participation.

In the study sessions, participants first completed a self-administered, computerized questionnaire that included demographic information, questions about their experiences with sexual activity, including birth control use and pregnancy, and measures of their attitudes toward premarital sexual activity and male-female relationships.[1] After completing these computerized questions, participants were asked to write a description of how they thought an ideal male-female relationship would develop, including if/when the relationship would include sexual intercourse.

After all participants had completed the first set of questions, the group watched one of three randomly chosen versions of a 12- to 14-minute, soap-opera-style program called "Academic Affairs," produced during the summer of 1988 with funding from the Center for Population Options. All versions of the program contain the same three story lines, which concern the problems and relationships of college students. The main story line is about a young couple, Jordan and Aaron, who are considering having sexual intercourse for the first time. The three versions of the soap opera vary in the extent to which contraception was discussed in this story line.[2]

The second story line, which remains the same across all three versions, concerns a young sorority pledge, Jenna, who is flunking out of school. When she tells her boyfriend, Parker, that she will fail her French class and be thrown out of the university, he offers to break into the university registrar's computer system to "fix" her grades so she will not flunk out, and she agrees to let him try it.

The final story line, also the same across all three versions, concerns two football players who are competing for the quarterback spot on the university's varsity team. Neither of the two players are mentioned in any of the dependent variable relationship statements considered here.

After watching the videotape, the participants completed the second half of the computerized questionnaire, which asked them to respond to a series of statements about the relationships between the characters and the characters' motivations for doing some of the things they did.

Measures

Sexual schema complexity -- Sexual Experience

Sexual experience. Respondents who indicated that they had ever had a physical heterosexual relationship (one that included at least hand-holding or kissing) were asked to indicate how many times (never, once, twice, three times or four or more times) they had held hands, kissed, necked, petted above the waist, petted below the waist and had sexual intercourse. The percentages of respondents indicating they had never engaged in the behavior increased most significantly at two points -- between kissing and necking and between petting below the waist and sexual intercourse. These two behaviors (necking and sexual intercourse) therefore were selected as measures of sexual experience.

Dating experience. Each respondent was asked to indicate whether he or she went out on dates with an opposite-sex partner "less than once a week," (coded as 1) "once a week," (coded as 2) "more than once a week" (coded as 3) or whether they were not yet allowed to date (coded as 0).

Sexual Schema Content -- Sexual Attitudes

Sex/relationship orientation. Each respondent was asked to indicate whether he or she strongly agreed, agreed, was neutral toward, disagreed or strongly disagreed with a series of statements about male-female relationships. Scores on the following statements, which were coded so that 5 indicated the strongest agreement, were averaged to produce a scale (Alpha coeffiencient = .71).

> Most women like to show off their bodies.
>
> Most women depend on men to get them out of trouble.
>
> Women often say "no" to sex when they mean "yes."
>
> A woman who goes home with a man on a first date implies that she wants to have sex.
>
> Flirting with someone usually means you are interested in having sex with him or her.

Sexual permissiveness. Respondents were asked to indicate at what point in a relationship they believed it was acceptable for a couple to hold hands, kiss, neck (defined as kissing and touching passionately), pet above the waist, pet below the waist and have sexual intercourse. For each activity, respondents chose from "when the couple has just met," "on a first date," "after several dates," "when the couple is going steady," "when the couple is engaged to be married" or "only after marriage." A permissiveness scale (Alpha coefficient = .90) was produced by averaging each participant's scores on all questions except the one about holding hands. Higher numbers indicated acceptance of sexual behaviors earlier in the relationship.

Sexual expectations. Participants' descriptions of the ideal relationship were content analyzed to determine whether or not sexual intercourse was expected in the relationship; each description was categorized as indicating that sexual intercourse definitely should not occur before engagement or marriage (coded as 0), that sex was acceptable before engagement or marriage but not expected (coded as 1), that sex was expected to be part of the relationship (coded as 2) or that it was impossible to tell whether sexual intercourse was expected or not (coded as missing). A second trained coder analyzed a 19 percent sample (14) of the open-ended responses. Inter-coder agreement was 93 percent.

Gender. Because research has shown that males and females' sexual scripts and expectations differ, gender also was used as a sexual schema content variable.

Television code schemas

Two variables were used as measures of the extent to which participants could be expected to understand the codes television producers use to indicate the characters are involved in a sexual relationship.

Weekly TV viewing. Each respondent indicated how much time he or she normally spent (during the school year) watching television each day "during the week (Monday through Thursday)," "on Fridays," and "each weekend day (Saturday or Sunday)." Answer options ranged from "0 hours" to "5 hours or more." An estimate of each respondent's total weekly TV viewing time was produced by multiplying the answer to the weekday question by four, multiplying the answer to the weekend question by two and adding those totals to the answer to the Friday question.

Soap opera viewing. Each respondent was asked to indicate whether, during an average week, he or she watched daytime and primetime soap operas "never," "1 or 2 days," "most days," or "every day." This item was coded so those who never watched had a score of 0 and those who watched every day had a score of 3.

Text content differences

Version. As discussed in footnote 1, the three versions of the soap opera varied in the extent of discussion of contraceptives. Two dummy variables were created to represent the version being watched. Version1 was coded 1 for viewers of Version 1 (no mention of contraceptives) and 0 for viewers of Versions 2 ("generic" mentions of contraceptives) and 3 (explicit discussion of contraceptives), and Version2 was coded 1 for viewers of Version 2 and 0 for viewers of Versions 1 and 3.

Control variable

Age. Age was used as a control variable since it was expected to be correlated with sexual experience and television viewing time, in addition to other indicators of sexual schema complexity (such as parental or school sex education) that were not measured.

Dependent Variables

Character relationship statements

After watching the soap opera, participants responded to a series of statements about the relationships between characters either shown or mentioned in the videotape, using a five-point scale (from strongly disagree, coded 1, to strongly agree, coded 5). Three were questions about whether characters already had or were beginning sexual relationships:

Aaron and Jordan had sex after the birthday dinner.

Lara (Jordan's roommate) had had sex with her boyfriend, Sage.

Jenna and Parker have had sex with each other.

Two other statements measured participants' belief that characters' actions were motivated by sexual interests or desire:

Lara's boyfriend Sage went out with Tatiana Lavinski just for sex.

Parker told Jenna he would "fix" her grade problem so she would have sex with him.

Combining the responses to these statements into a scale did not produce an acceptable alpha, so they were used as separate dependent variables.

Analysis

Tests of each of the hypotheses involved running a series of regression analyses. On the initial set of regressions for each statement, the sexual schema complexity and content variables were entered in the first block, followed by gender. In the third block, the television schema variables were entered, and in the last block, the dummy variables for version were entered with the control variable, age.

For the second set of regressions, variables that had probability levels less than .10 in the initial regressions were entered together in the first block. The remaining variables then were tested individually for their contribution to explaining variation in the dependent variable, using an F-test for incremental R^2-change. Only variables that contributed significantly to the explanation of variance were retained in the final model for each dependent variable.

Results

Perceptions of relationships as sexual

Table 1 shows the regression coefficients (betas) and significance level for predictors of each of the statements about participants' perceptions of relationships as sexual, after the final round of regressions.

Table 1 about here

Jordan and Aaron had sex. Few participants disagreed with this statement, not surprisingly since the largest portion of the soap opera consisted of discussions of or preparations for the beginning of this sexual relationship. However, agreement was not uniform in strength. As Table 1 shows, boys expressed stronger agreement with this statement than did girls. Television viewing was not itself significant, but was retained in the final model because its presence increased the significance of gender, suggesting that boys who watched less television were particularly likely to agree that Aaron and Jordan had sex.

Lara and Sage had had sex. The variables retained in the final model predicting responses to this statement were necking experience, weekly television viewing and the dummy variable (Version2) coded 1 for those watching Version 2 of the soap opera and 0 for those watching Versions 1 or 3. As Table 1 shows, adolescents who had engaged in necking at least once were more likely to perceive Lara's relationship with her boyfriend as sexual. Participants who spent less time watching television and those watching the versions of the soap opera containing no discussion of contraception or explicit discussions of contraception were more likely to perceive the relationship as sexual.

Jenna and Parker had had sex. Age and the expectation that sex would be part of an ideal relationship were positively related to agreement with this statement, but dating was negatively related. Overall, then older participants who dated less frequently but had greater expectations that sex would be part of an ideal relationship were most likely to perceive Jenna and Parker's relationship as sexual.

Perceptions of actions as sexually motivated

Table 2 shows the regression coefficients (betas) and significance level for predictors of each of the statements about participants' perceptions of whether characters' actions were motivated by sexual interest, after the final round of regressions.

Table 2 about here

Parker fixed Jenna's grades for sex. As Table 2 shows, participants who scored higher on the sex/relationship orientation scale were more likely to agree with this statement. In contrast, however, more sexually permissive participants were less likely to agree, as were those who spent more hours watching television each week. A comparison of the predictors for this statement and the statement that Jenna and Parker had had sex suggests that participants may have viewed these two statements as mutually exclusive alternatives. That is, those who believed Jenna and Parker had had sex already were less likely to believe that Parker offered to try to alter Jenna's grades in hopes of winning sexual favors from her. Although the significant predictors for the two statements differ, examination of the non-significant betas for sexual permissiveness in the Jenna and Parker full regression model and for age and dating in the grades-for-sex full regression model suggest a split in responses between younger, more sexually permissive participants who dated more frequently and older, less permissive participants with less dating experience; the former seem to have been more likely to think Parker was trying to win Jenna's sexual favors, while the latter appear to have been more likely to think he already had.

Sage went out with Tatania for sex. Age was the only predictor that approached significance for this statement. As Table 2 shows, older viewers were more likely to agree with this statement than were younger viewers.

Conclusions and Discussion

Sexual Schema Complexity

This study examined the influence of two components of sexual schemas -- complexity and content -- on adolescents' interpretations of the relationships between male and female television characters. The results show that dating frequency and experience with necking did influence adolescents' perceptions of heterosexual relationships. Adolescents who had engaged in necking more often were more likely to believe that one couple (which included a man who never appeared on the screen) had had sex. This suggests that adolescents who have engaged in necking have sexual schemas complex enough to allow them to understand the verbal and visual cues indicative of sexual relationships between television characters. The fact that necking was not significant in predicting responses to statements about two other couples, both of whom were shown kissing and hugging, suggests that sexual experience may be particularly important when the stimulus configuration is more ambiguous. The lack of any relationship between coital experience and the relationship statements suggests that necking experience may give adolescents a complex or complete enough schema to enable them to interpret ambiguous sexual content as more experienced viewers would; it would seem that by the time teenagers have reached the necking stage in their sexual experiences, they not only understand the behaviors in which they are engaging, but also are aware of what they are not doing.

There are at least two possible explanations for the negative relationship of dating frequency with agreement that Jenna and Parker had had sex. First, as noted earlier, viewers who dated more frequently were more likely (though not significantly so) than less frequent daters to believe that Parker's offer to fix Jenna's grades was sexually motivated. Thus, the negative relationship with perception of Jenna and Parker's relationship as sexual may reflect more frequent daters' choice of the "grades-for-sex" statement as the more likely alternatively.

The second possible explanation stems from the interaction between dating frequency and age in the regression predicting agreement that Jenna and Parker had had sex. Age is positively related to agreement, suggesting that older adolescents who dated less frequently were more likely to agree. These older adolescents may have had fairly well-developed sexual schemas, but they may have been schemas gained primarily though indirect experience. They may, therefore, have been less likely to search for subtle cues to sexual interaction that may be learned through dating. More experienced daters may have searched for these cues but not found them, leading them to rate a sexual relationship between Jenna and Parker as less likely (Markus & Smith, 1981).

Sexual Schema Content

Support for Hypothesis 2, which had predicted that boys would be more likely than girls to view male-female interactions in the program as indicative of sexual relationships between the characters, emerged from only one analysis; boys were more likely than girls to agree that Aaron and Jordan had sex after her birthday dinner. This gender effect probably resulted from male-female differences in a set of attitudes not measured by any of the sexual attitude questions in the questionnaires. Goodchilds and Zellman (1984) have found that boys are more likely than girls to believe that a boy would be justified in getting angry if his partner engaged in suggestive behaviors but then refused to have sexual intercourse with him. In the final scene of "Academic Affairs," Jordan tells Aaron she wants to have sex with him, later clearly implies that she has decided to have sex and shows off the lingerie her roommate gave her as a birthday present. Boys appear to have interpreted these signals from Jordan as irrevocable agreement that she would have sex, while girls seem to have been more willing to think the couple might still change their minds about having sex.

As expected, boys' attitudes about male-female relationships placed greater emphasis on sexual activity, indicated stronger expectations that sexual intercourse would be part of an ideal relationship and reflected greater acceptance of sexual activity earlier in relationships. As predicted in Hypothesis 3, the attitude components of sexual schemas influenced perceptions of the relationships between the soap opera characters. Scores on the sex/relationship orientation scale were positively related to agreement that Parker offered to alter Jenna's grades so she would have sex with him. In addition, the sexual expectations measure was positively related to the belief that Jenna and Parker had had sex, as was sex/relationship orientation, although the latter was not a significant predictor.

On the other hand, sexual permissiveness was negatively related to the grades-for-sex statements. As noted earlier, however, this may reflect a tendency for participants to view the grades-for-sex explanation as an alternative to the belief that Jenna and Parker already had a sexual relationship. Sexual permissiveness was positively related to the latter statement, although the relationship was not significant. All three of the sexual attitude measures were strongly correlated, but their inconsistent influences on perceptions of relationships between characters suggest that they tap different, though usually related, aspects of sexual schemas.

Television Schemas

Hypothesis 4 had predicted that more frequent television and soap opera viewers would be more likely to understand the cues used to suggest sexual relationships between characters in "Academic Affairs." Instead, television viewing was a significant, negative predictor of agreement that Lara and Sage had had sex and that Parker's offer to fix Lara's grades was sexually motivated. Television viewing also was retained in the final model predicting agreement that Aaron and Jordan had had sex; although it was not itself significant, its presence in the model enhanced the effect of gender. Again the relationship was negative.

The basis for Hypothesis 4 was that those who watch more television have learned better the codes used to imply that a male and female are involved sexually. The negative influence of television viewing suggests, instead, that heavier viewers may have learned these codes too well. As several participants noted, "Academic Affairs" was not very sexy compared to most prime-time programs and day-time soap operas. Even in the most suggestive scenes, both characters are fully clothed and sitting, as opposed to lying down together. The results suggest that the schemas of more frequent television viewers directed them to search for more explicit indicators of sexual relationships or interactions between the "Academic Affairs" characters; the heavier television viewers seem to have spent most of their study viewing time waiting for more explicit sexual interaction to appear on the screen.

The Influence of the Text

Somewhat unexpectedly, the dummy variable distinguishing viewers of the soap opera version containing explicit discussions of contraceptives (see footnote 1) from the version containing only generic mentions of birth control was a significant predictor of agreement that Lara and Sage had had sex. Those who watched Version 3, in which Lara assures Jordan that she (Jordan) will get used to buying over-the-counter contraceptives, were more likely to conclude that Lara had had sex with her boyfriend.

Study Limitations

A number of significant limitations of the study should be addressed. First, budget and time constraints limited the number of adolescents who could participate in the study; the small sample size may have made it impossible to detect differences that would have been significant with a larger sample. In addition, the study participants were all white and probably somewhat unrepresentative even of other white teenagers because the population of the cities in which they lived tends to be better educated, wealthier and more liberal than the general population.

Second, the use of multiple independent variables and the fact that the dependent variables did not produce a reliable scale forced separate analyses of individual dependent-variable statements, producing large numbers of individual sub-hypotheses. Although many of the results were consistent with predictions that teenagers' sexual schemas would influence their interpretations of the soap opera characters' relationships, nonetheless the possibility remains that the results were due to chance.

Finally, the methods used to measure participants' attitudes toward heterosexual relationships and their perceptions of the characters' relationships had not been tested in other studies, making it difficult to compare the results of this study with any other.

Theoretical and Policy Implications

Although study limitations reduce the confidence one can have in the results of this study and increase the need for further testing of the relationships between adolescents' sexual schemas and their interpretations of media sexual content, the study nonetheless has produced some interesting results. The study has provided evidence that differences in the context-relevant experiences and attitudes adolescents bring to the processing of mass media can influence the meanings they make of those messages. This finding highlights the need for formative and evaluative research on any mass mediated message that is intended to influence adolescents' sexual knowledge, attitudes or behaviors. For public service campaigns to be effective, for instance, those developing the campaigns must test the messages with target group adolescents to see whether or not the messages are perceived as the campaigners intend.

It may be especially important for planners of educational programs -- mass-mediated or otherwise -- to understand how teenagers' pre-existing schemas for sexual behavior may interfere with their reception of the messages the programs are intended to convey. For instance, CBS, ABC and NBC all at least occasionally produce afterschool programming directed especially at teenagers and pre-teens, and these programs virtually always seem to be designed, at least in part, to teach young viewers some lesson about alcoholism, drug abuse, AIDS, the physically disabled, sexuality or some other controversial issue. Program producers and non-network advocates need to keep in mind, however, that if the message of a single show runs counter to what a teenage viewer already believes (e.g., to the messages he or she has encountered in most other television programs), that teenager's schemas may cause him or her to "hear" a very different message, perhaps even a message diametrically opposed to the producer's intent.

The study also suggests the need for further study into the meanings adolescents make of the heterosexual relationships they see portrayed in television programs and the ways in which those perceptions are integrated into their real-life experiences and attitudes. For instance, the unexpected finding that adolescents who watch more television were less likely to perceive characters as sexually involved suggests that heavy viewers have come to expect television programs to contain relatively explicit sexual content, or, at least, more explicit content than they found in "Academic Affairs." If, as cultivation theorists argue, these expectations for television behavior are carried over into viewers' expectations for real-life behavior, then watching heavy doses of sexually explicit television content may encourage adolescents to expect their male and female peers to act the same way television characters act. Thus adolescents who spend many hours in front of the TV may develop or strengthen the expectations that males should be sexually aggressive, that females should initially resist but eventually succumb to aggressive sexual advances and that truly romantic and loving couples should have sexual intercourse without protecting themselves from pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases.

In terms of theoretical implications, this study suggests that schema theory may indeed prove useful in helping mass media researchers understand why and how adolescents differ in their cognitive and behavioral responses to a given media message and to their overall exposure to the sexual content in mass media. Selective perception theory, of course, already has provided a mechanism for explaining why viewers may interpret a character's words or action differently, but schema theory has the potential to help us understand how those differing interpretations are constructed -- through the direction of the viewer's attention to different cues, through the imposition of differing structures of relationships and through the insertion of different "default options" for missing or ambiguous information.

This study provides evidence that adolescents watching a given episode of any television program see not one story but many; which story an adolescent sees depends, at least to some extent, on the schemas he or she brings to the viewing context. Thus, determining how watching sexual content on television will affect adolescents' sexual attitudes and behaviors is more complicated than simply counting the appearances of different types of sexual behaviors in television programs or tracking adolescents' reactions to a single instance or type of sexual content.

Despite the difficulties, we must continue to try to determine how the stories adolescents see on television are incorporated into their sexual schemas. Given that adolescents' sexual schemas almost certainly influence their involvement in sexual violence and unprotected sexual intercourse, leading to such unhealthy outcomes as unwanted pregancies and sexually transmitted diseases, it is imperative that we continue to study the role that television and other media play in the development of those schemas.

---

[1] Paperny, Aono, Lehman, Hammar, and Risser (1990) have found that adolescents who used a computerized questionnaire were more likely than teens using a paper-and-pencil questionnaire to give affirmative responses to questions about high-risk psychosocial and health behaviors. In addition, 89 percent of teens said they preferred the computer format over the written questionnaire or a personal interview.

[2] In the first version of this story line, there is no mention whatsoever of birth control or contraceptives. In the second version, conversations between Jordan and her roommate, Aaron and his roommate, and Jordan and Aaron include non-specific references to "protection" or "protecting yourself," and in a drugstore scene, Aaron is shown picking up a package of condoms. In the third version, the conversations include discussion of specific contraceptive methods, including spermicidal foam, contraceptive sponges and condoms. The drugstore scene again shows Aaron buying condoms and also shows the clerk having to shout across the store to ask her manager what they should cost. In the final scene, Aaron and Jordan somewhat sheepishly show each other the birth control methods each has brought.

References

Abbey, A. (1986). Sex differences in attributions for friendly behavior: Do males misperceive females' friendliness? Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 42(5), 830-838.

Allen, R.C. (1985). Speaking of soap operas. Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press.

Baran, S.J. (1976). Sex on TV and adolescent sexual self-image. Journal of Broadcasting, 20(1), 61-68.

Black, J.B., Galambos, J.A., & Read, S.J. (1984). Comprehending stories and social situations. In Wyer, R.S. Jr., & Srull, T.K., (Eds.), Handbook of social cognition, Vol. 3. (pp. 45-86), Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Brigham, J.C., & Giesbrecht, L.W. (1976). "All in the Family": Racial attitudes. Journal of Communication, 26(4), 69-74.

Brown, J.D., & Newcomer, S.F. (in press). Influences of television and peers on adolescents' sexual behavior. Journal of Homosexuality.

Brown, J.D., & Schulze, L. (1990). The effects of fandom, race and gender on interpretations of sexuality in Madonna's music videos. Journal of Communication, 40(2), 88-102.

Cantor, N., & Mischel, W. (1977). Traits as prototypes: Effects on recognition memory. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 35(1), 38-48.

Carns, D.E. (1973). Talking about sex: Notes on first coitus and the double sexual standard. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 35, 677-688.

Coles, R., & Stokes, G. (1985). Sex and the American teenager. New York: Harper & Row/Rolling Stone Press.

Collins, J.K. (1974). Adolescent dating intimacy: Norms and peer expectations. Journal of Youth and Adolescence, 3(4), 317-328.

DeLamater, J., & MacCorquodale, P. (1979). Premarital sexuality: Attitudes, relationships, behavior. Madison, WI: The University of Wisconsin Press.

Dervin, B. (1983). Information as a user construct: The relevance of perceived information needs to synthesis and interpretation. In S.A. Ward, & L.J. Reed (Eds.), Knowledge structure and use: Implications for synthesis and interpretation. Temple University Press.

Dorr,. A. (1986). *Television and children: A special medium for a special audience*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Fernandez-Collado, C.F., Greenberg, B.X., Korzenny, F. (1978). Sexual intimacy and drug use in TV series. *Journal of Communication*, *28*(3), 30-37.

Fiske, S.T., & Kinder, D.R. (1981). Involvement, expertise, and schema use: Evidence from political cognition. In N. Cantor & J.F. Kihlstrom, (Eds.), *Personality,cognition and social interaction*. (pp. 171-190). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Fiske, S.T., Kinder, D.R., & Larter, W.M. (1983). The novice and the expert: knowledge-based strategies in political cognition. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, *19*(4), 381-400.

Gagnon, J.H., & Roberts, E.J. (1980). Content and process in parental verbal communication about sexuality to preadolescent children (Project on Human Sexual Development). Unpublished manuscript, Harvard University, quoted in Parsons, J.E. (1983). Sexual socialization and gender roles in childhood. In E.R. Allgeier & N.B. McCormick (Eds.) *Changing boundaries: Gender roles and sexual behavior*. (pp. 19-48). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.

Gagnon, J.H., & Simon, W. (1973). *Sexual conduct: The social sources of human sexuality*. Chicago: Aldine.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1986). Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process. In J. Bryant & D. Zillman (Eds.), *Perspectives on media effects*. (pp. 17-40). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Goldman, R., & Goldman, J. (1982). *Children's sexual thinking: A comparative study of children aged 5 to 15 years in Australia, North America, Britain and Sweden*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Goodchilds, J.C., & Zellman, G.L. (1984). Sexual signaling and sexual aggression in adolescent relationships. In N.M. Malamuth & E. Donnerstein (Eds.), *Pornography and Sexual Aggression*. (pp. 233-234). New York: Academic Press.

Greenberg, B.S., Abelman, R., & Neuendorf, K. (1981). Sex on the soap operas: Afternoon delight. *Journal of Communication*, *31*(3), 83-89.

Greenberg, B.S., & D'Alessio, D. (1985). Quantity and quality of sex in the soaps. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, *29*(3), 309-321.

Greenberg, B.S., Graef, D., Fernandez-Collado, C., Korzenny, F., & Atkin, C.K. (1980). Sexual intimacy on commercial TV during prime time. *Journalism Quarterly*, *57*, 211-215.

Greenberg, B.S., Linsangan, R.L., Soderman, A., et al. (1987). Adolescents and their exposure to television and movie sex. Project CAST Report #4, Michigan State: Department of Telecommunication.

Greenberg, B.S., Stanley, C., Siemicki, M., et al. (1986). Sex content on soaps and primetime television series most viewed by adolescents. Project CAST Report #2, Michigan State: Department of Telecommunication.

Greeson, L.E., & Williams, R.A. (1986). Social implications of music videos for youth: An analysis of the content and effects of MTV. Youth & Society, 18(2), 177-189.

Hayes, C.D. (Ed.). (1987). Risking the future: Adolescent sexuality, pregnancy and childbearing. Vol. 1. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Hofferth, S.L., & Hayes, C.D. (1987). Risking the future: Adolescent sexuality, pregnancy, and childbearing: Vol. 2. Working papers and statistical reports. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press.

Jones, E., Forest, J., Goldman, N., et al. (1987) Teenage pregnancy in industrialized countries. New Haven: Yale University.

Jones, E.E., & Nisbett, R.E. (1971). The actor and the observer: Divergent perceptions of the causes of behavior. In E.E. Jones, D.E. Kanouse, H.H. Kelley, R.E. Nisbett, S. Valins, & B. Weiner (Eds.), Attribution: Perceiving the causes of behavior. Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press.

Kalof, L. (1989). Dilemmas of femininity: Gender differences in the interpretation of sexual imagery. Paper presented at the Seventh International Conference on Culture and Communication, Philadelphia, PA, October.

Kenrick, D.T., & Gutierres, S.E. (1980). Contrast effects and judgements of physical attractiveness: When beauty becomes a social problem. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 38(1), 131-140.

Koss, M.P., Gidycza, C.A., & Wisniewski, N. (1985). The scope of rape: Incidence and prevalence of sexual aggression and victimization in a national sample of higher education students. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 55, 162-170.

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. (1985). Public attitudes about sex education, family planning, and abortion in the United States. New York: Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc.

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. (1986). American teens speak: Sex, myths, TV, and birth control. New York: Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc.

Louis Harris and Associates, Inc. (1987). Sexual material on American network television during the 1987-88 season. New York: Planned Parenthood Federation of America, Inc..

Lowry, D.T., & Towles, D.E. (1989). Soap opera portrayals of sex, contraception, and sexually transmitted diseases. Journal of Communication, 39(2), 76-83.

Markus, H., & Smith, J. (1981). The influence of self-schemata on perception of others. In N. Cantor, & J.F. Kihlstrom (Eds.), Personality, cognition and social interaction. (pp. 233-262). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Minsky, M. (1975). A framework for representing knowledge. In P.H. Winston (Ed.), The psychology of computer vision. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Paperny, D.M., Aono, J.Y., Lehman, R.M., Hammar, S.L., & Risser, J. (1990). Computer-assisted detection and intervention in adolescent high-risk health behaviors. Journal of Pediatrics, 116(3), 456-462.

Parsons, J.E. (1983). Sexual socialization and gender roles in childhood. In E.R. Allgeier & N.B. McCormick (Eds.) Changing boundaries: Gender roles and sexual behavior. (pp. 19-48). Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.

Peterson, J.L., Moore, K.A., & Furstenberg, F.F. (in press). Television viewing and early initiation of sexual intercourse: Is there a link? Journal of Homosexuality.

Rice, G.E. (1980). On cultural schemata. American Ethnologist, 152-171.

Roberts, E.J. (1982). Television and sexual learning in childhood. In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet & J. Lazar (Eds.), Television and behavior: Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the eighties, Vol. 2: Technical Reviews. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Rothenberg, P.B. (1980). Communication about sex and birth control between mothers and their adolescent children. Population and Environment, 3, 35-50.

Scales, P. (1977). Males and morals: Teenage contraceptive behavior and the double standard. Family Coordinator, 26, 211-220.

Sherman, B.L., & Dominick, J.R. (1986). Violence and sex in music videos: TV and rock 'n' roll. Journal of Communication, 36(1), 79-93.

Signorielli, N. (1986). Selective television viewing: A limited possibility. Journal of Communication, 36(3), 64-76.

Silverman, L.T., & Sprafkin, J.N. (1980). Adolescents' reactions to televised sexual innuendos. Final report to the American Broadcasting Companies, Inc.

Silverman, L.T., Sprafkin, J.N., & Rubinstein, E.A. (1979). Physical contact and sexual behavior on prime-time TV. Journal of Communication, 29(1), 33-43.

Spanier, G.B. (1977). Sources of sex information and premarital sexual behavior. Journal of Sex Research, 13(2), 73-88.

Surlin, S.H., & Tate, E.D. (1976). "All in the Family": Is Archie funny? Journal of Communication, 26(4), 60-68.

Taylor, S.E., & Crocker, J. (1981). Schematic bases of social information processing. In N. Cantor & J.F. Kihlstrom, (Eds.), Personality, cognition and social interaction. (pp. 89-134). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

U.S. House of Representatives Select Committee on Children, Youth and Families. (1987). Fact sheet: AIDS and teenagers. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Vidmar, N., & Rokeach, M. (1974). Archie Bunker's bigotry: A study in selective perception and exposure. Journal of Communication, 24(1), 36-47.

Voelker, D.H., & Pettey, G.R. (1989). Schema-triggered cognitive and affective response to music: Applying an information-processing model to rock 'n' roll. Paper presented at the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication conference, Washington, D.C., August 6-12.

Wilhoit, G.C., & de Bock, H. (1976). "All in the Family" in Holland. Journal of Communication, 26(4), 75-84.

Zadny, J., & Gerard, H.B. (1974). Attributed intentions and informational selectivity. Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 10(1), 34-52.

Zellman, G.L., & Goodchilds, J.D. (1983). Becoming sexual in adolescence. In E.R. Allgeier & N.B. McCormick (Eds.), Changing boundaries: Gender roles and sexual behavior. (pp. 49-63) Palo Alto, CA: Mayfield Publishing Co.

Zillman, D., & Bryant, J. (1982). Pornography, sexual callousness and the trivialization of rape. Journal of Communication, 32(4), 10-21.

Table 1: **Standardized regression coefficients (betas) for variables predicting agreement with statements that relationships are sexual**

Independent variables	**Jordan & Aaron had sex**	**Lara & Sage had sex**	**Jenna & Parker had sex**
Dating	----	----	-.429***
Necking experience	----	.260**	----
Sex/relationship orientation	----	----	----
Sexual expectations	----	----	.230**
Sexual permissiveness	----	----	----
Gender[a]	.203*	----	----
TV viewing	-.195	-.254**	----
Age	----	----	.219*
Version1[b]	----	----	----
Version2	----	-.247**	----
R^2	.170	.031	.142
F	4.782	3.295	4.695
df	3,62	1,70	3,64
p.	.0022	.0738	.0050

Note. [a]Gender is coded 1 for girls, 2 for boys.
[b]Version1 is a dummy variable coded 1 for Version 1 (in which there was no mention of contraceptives) and 0 for Versions 2 and 3. Version2 is another dummy variable coded 1 for Version 2 and 0 for Versions 1 and 3.
*p. < .10, **p. < .05, ***p. < .01

Table 2: Standardized regression coefficients (betas) for variables predicting agreement with statements that actions are sexually motivated.

Independent variables	**Parker fixed grades for sex**	**Sage went w/ Tatania for sex**
Dating	----	----
Necking experience	----	----
Sex/relationship orientation	.502***	----
Sexual expectations	----	----
Sexual permissiveness	-.227*	----
Gender[a]	----	----
TV viewing	-.336***	----
Age	----	.212*
Version1[b]	----	----
Version2	----	----
R^2	.229	.061
F	6.747	3.117
df	3,55	2,63
p.	.0006	.0512

Note. [a]Gender is coded 1 for girls, 2 for boys.
[b]Version1 is a dummy variable coded 1 for Version 1 (in which there was no mention of contraceptives) and 0 for Versions 2 and 3. Version2 is another dummy variable coded 1 for Version 2 and 0 for Versions 1 and 3.
*p. < .10, **p. < .05, ***p. < .01

TELEVISION AND CRIME COVERAGE:
A COMPARISON OF THE ATTITUDES OF NEWS DIRECTORS AND VICTIM ADVOCATES

By

Tommy Thomason
Assistant Professor of Journalism
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas

and

Paul LaRocque
Student Publications Director
Texas Christian University
Fort Worth, Texas

Research Funded by the Ethics and Excellence in Journalism Foundation of Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and conducted in cooperation with the National Victim Center.

Presented to the Radio-TV Journalism Division
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication
August 7, 1991

Television and Crime Coverage:
A Comparison of the Attitudes of News Directors and Victim Advocates

Crime news has been a staple of the American news diet for more than 150 years. But only within the past decade have journalists begun to question seriously how they cover stories involving victims of crime.[1] The issues discussed do not focus on the **legal** rights of journalists to cover news involving public interest, public agencies and public records. Instead, they involve **ethical** issues--the consideration for the privacy of individuals caught up in a matter of public interest.

For newspapers, one of the primary issues has been the use of names and addresses of crime victims.[2] Since the days of the Penny Press (the 1830s), newspapers have routinely printed the addresses of crime victims. Printing those names and addresses, however, has resulted in public harassment and embarrassment to these victims, and sometimes might put their lives in danger from criminals not yet apprehended by law enforcement officers.[3] Another issue has been the use of pictures--of grieving family members, mourners at funerals, and victims of crimes and accidents.[4] Other complaints have focused on the excesses of pack journalism and the unfeeling attitude of reporters as they pursue their stories on deadline.[5] In a 1985 survey by the American Society of Newspaper Editors, 78 percent of the people questioned said they believed the press does not "worry much about hurting people." Almost two-thirds of the respondents said journalists take advantage of the victims of circumstance.[6]

Recent research (1988) by the authors, however, indicates that the attitudes of print journalists may be changing. The authors have documented a trend, extending back over the past 15 years, to use fewer names and addresses of crime victims.[7] The topic of crime victims and the media has become commonplace in the professional literature and professional meetings of print journalists.

But when crime victims share their complaints about the media, it is often television that draws their sharpest rebukes. Time Magazine said: "Perhaps the worst transgressor is the TV camera operator who zooms in on the face of a dead person's relative--and stays there as the face dissolves in grief."[8] And despite the complaints about the print press, crime victims often say it is the visual impact and immediacy of TV journalism that bring the most hurt. Crime victims also say that competitive pressures and the need for compelling film footage make TV news directors less sensitive than newspaper editors to their concern about the privacy rights of victims.[9]

The present study compares the attitudes of television news directors on crime news with attitudes of victim advocates (people active in crime- victim support groups). The study addressed the following research questions:

1) Have television stations made recent changes in their policies and practices on coverage of stories involving crime news? If so, what changes have been made?

2) What are the similarities and differences in the attitudes of news directors and victim advocates regarding a number of common types of crime stories?

3) How do the opinions of news directors and victim advocates compare on several key issues related to the right to know vs. the right to privacy?

METHOD

Separate questionnaires were mailed to television news directors and a sampling of victim advocates throughout the United States in 1990. A questionnaire was mailed to the news director of every ABC, CBS, and NBC station in each of the nation's 213 Areas of Dominant Influence (ADI's). An ADI is an exclusive geographic area consisting of all counties in which the home-market station receives a preponderance of total viewing hours. And 533 questionnaires were mailed. A total of 283 were returned, for a return rate of 53 percent.

A similar questionnaire was mailed to 479 victim advocates selected at random from a comprehensive list of victim advocacy and support groups maintained by the National Victim Center of Fort Worth, Texas. Two victim advocate organizations were selected at random from each ADI. Several ADI's did not have two active victim support groups. However, at least one victim-advocate group in each ADI received a questionnaire. A total of 247 were returned, for a return rate of 52 percent. The return rates were similar to the authors' return rates on previous studies on newspaper editors and victim advocates.

The news director and victim advocate questionnaires were similar, to allow for comparison of responses. In the hypothetical cases presented, news directors were asked what they would do in each of the cases. Victim advocates were asked to assume they were a TV news director, and answer the questions as they would if they could set station policy.

RESULTS

The study found significant differences between the two groups. Though most news directors (83 percent) agreed that increased attention to the privacy rights of crime victims is a good thing and stations should respect the privacy rights of individuals unwillingly in the public eye, they favored using controversial footage described in several case studies, all based on real-life news events.

The case studies included these situations:

*A woman's home is destroyed in a fire that kills her two children. Firefighters restrain the hysterical mother outside the house when she learns of the deaths. Your news photographer has exclusive photos of the dramatic scene. When news directors were asked if they would broadcast the footage, 81 percent said they would, and 17 percent said they would not. The percentages were reversed among the victim advocates, with 14 percent saying the footage should be aired and 80 percent disagreeing with its use.

*Another case study added a competitive factor to the fire story. News directors who said they would not use the footage were told that a competing station had the pictures also. Of those who had originally declined to run the footage, 59 percent said they would either run it on the next newscast or wait to see if the competition used it on an earlier newscast, and then run it on a later newscast if the competition did.

*Another case was adapted from a well-known controvertial case in newspaper photojournalism. A mental patient is holding his estranged wife hostage in her apartment and has taken all of her clothing to keep her from escaping. She does escape, however, and runs to police outside, covered only by a small towel. The news directors were asked if they would broadcast pictures of the woman, assuming that the towel covered her private parts. While only 5 percent of the victim advocates would air the pictures and 92 percent would not, 59 percent of the news directors said it was appropriate to broadcast the pictures, with 32 percent disagreeing.

On the issue of broadcasting pictures taken of a murder victim at a crime scene without the permission of the family, 80 percent of the of the news directors--but only 7 percent of the victim advocates--said this did not violate the family's privacy. When the murder victim was in a body bag, 90 percent of the news directors said pictures of the body bag did not violate the family's privacy. Only 30 percent of the victim advocates agreed. However, most in both groups (70 percent of the victim advocates and 65 percent of the news directors) agreed that using file footage of body bags from local murders as lead-ins or promotions to news programs was unacceptable.

Most news directors also said (76 percent) that they would not broadcast pictures of a suicide that occurred in a public place.

On case studies that involved reporting **information** instead of dramatic pictures, news directors were more likely to agree to withholding certain facts.

*A young woman who lived with her mother is murdered, and her body is found in a remote area of the county. A TV reporter does a story that includes an overall shot of the apartment complex where she lived with her mother. Later, there is a three-second shot of the mother's front door, showing the apartment number. News directors were asked if they would edit out the address. Sixty-six percent said they would edit it out, and 27 percent said they would leave it in; 98 percent of the victim advocates would remove the door scene and only 1 percent would leave it in.

*A woman works at a convenience store where a robbery is attempted. She cleverly avoids giving the robbers any money and they escape and are still at large. News directors were asked if they would identify her by name in their story. Forty-eight percent said they would not identify her, and 44 percent said they would. The case was similar to one posed by the authors to newspaper editors in previous studies. Given the same situation in 1976, 48 percent of the newspaper editors said they would publish the clerk's name and address. When that question was posed to editors in later studies, the figure had dropped to 23 percent in 1983, to 9 percent in 1985, and to 5 percent in 1988.[10]

*A woman is gang raped in a bar and the story receives national media attention. A local cable outlet broadcasts the trial of the men accused of the rape and, as a result, several area newspapers publish the woman's name. News directors were asked if they would deviate from their normal policy of not identifying rape victims in this case. Sixty-three percent said they would still not identify her, and 33 percent said they would. Ninety-two percent of the victim advocates said she should not be identified.

Several news directors said that it was difficult to answer hypothetical questions without seeing the video. They said their stations had no policy on situations like these, but judged each on a case-by-case basis.

Many of the victim advocates said they thought the TV stations in their cities made little effort to consider the effects their video might have on crime victims. One wrote:

> The right to know that a murder occurred does not include the right to see all parts of a human brain clinging to a living room wall, all in living color.... My right to know is not enhanced by the visual depiction of victims or survivors--only my prurient interests may be. I know of no right the public has to voyeurism.

The news directors and victim advocates also disagreed significantly on several other issues:

--63 percent of the victim advocates, but only 45 percent of the news directors, said the public would seek to limit what can be broadcast regarding crime victims unless the media show more discretion in broadcasting of victim identities and other sensitive material,

--49 percent of victim advocates, but only 15 percent of news directors, thought victim support groups had been influential in shaping TV news policies,

--70 percent of victim advocates, but only 36 percent of news directors, thought broadcasters should contact victims and seek their opinions in crime story coverage,

--85 percent of victim advocates, but only 26 percent of news directors thought concern for ratings and competition often outweigh concern for a victim in making decisions on whether to broadcast sensitive footage,

--62 percent of victim advocates, but only 31 percent of news directors, thought TV was less sensitive to victim privacy than other media.

While only 15 percent of the news directors said that victim groups had influenced their policies and only 40 percent said professional journalism organizations had influenced them, many wrote that they thought their crime coverage policies reflected standards in their community. One news director said:

> It should be recognized that the public in any market sets the tone for what is appropriate on the air. What might be considered normal coverage in Dallas or Houston might not be acceptable in a smaller Texas market. In a sense we are a mirror for our viewers to see themselves in the local world they live in that day. If an incident is horrible or distasteful, we must report just how horrible or distasteful that event is, but without sanitizing it to the point that all human emotion is lost.

Though the survey included stations from all sizes of markets, no statistically significant differences were found in the attitudes of news directors from large, medium, or small markets. The only difference among the various size markets was that news directors in small and medium-sized markets said they received more complaints about crime coverage than news directors in larger markets did. More than 50 percent of the news directors in markets of fewer than 500,000 said they received complaints either frequently or occasionally. In markets larger than 1 million, 64 percent of the news directors said they seldom or never received complaints.

SUMMARY

The study indicates that television news directors agree in principle that crime victims do have privacy rights and the private individual's right to privacy is not outweighed by the public's right to know. However, it also shows that when the issue is good news footage--and especially when the competition also has the pictures--TV is less likely to defer to the privacy rights of the individual unwillingly in the public spotlight. News directors are more likely to honor a person's privacy by withholding a name or address (which TV doesn't normally run anyway) than by choosing not to air dramatic footage of an anguished victim or a murder scene.

A comparison of this study with the authors' similar studies of newspaper managing editors in 1985 and 1988 indicates that the newspaper editors appear to be more sensitive to victim concerns than TV news directors. The authors asked managing editors if they had changed their policies or practices regarding stories involving crime victims. In 1985, 52 percent of the editors said they had made changes. In this study, news directors were asked if their policies on news coverage involving crime victims had changed during the last few years. Only 22 percent of news directors said that it had, with 77 percent saying that it had not changed. When victim advocates were asked to comment on their perceptions of crime coverage on their local stations, 29 percent said they thought they detected a change over the last few years and 58 percent said they could see no difference.

Of those news directors who said their stations' policy on stories involving crime victims had changed, most said they had become more sensitive to victims' rights to privacy. Some said they had stopped using "body shots." Other said they would not broadcast pictures of uncovered bodies.

"We use a great deal more discretion in what pictures we show and how we deal with crime victims," one news director said. "I would hope that we are infinitely more sensitive when we deal with these people."

Another said the station did not have a script approval policy, and concern for victims' rights was a factor in the station adopting such a policy.

Most of those victim advocates who said they saw a change in television coverage of crime victims said the trend was toward more sensitivity. However, some saw changes in the other direction.

"It seems that we are seeing more interviews of victims who are in no shape to be giving interviews," one advocate said. "We are also seeing body bags or victims covered with blankets more and more."

Journalists' sympathies with victims might be influenced more highly by the unique demands of their medium. While television is heavily dependent on action footage, newspapers include more details--such as names and addresses. When the authors asked news directors if the trend toward broadcasting fewer names and addresses interferes with the public's right to know, only 21 percent said that it did. That could be indicative of the relative unimportance of names and addresses in a visual medium. When newspaper editors were asked the same question, 40 percent said the trend interfered with the public's right to know.[12]

One place where the print and electronic journalists did seem to agree was that their policies were relatively uninfluenced by victim advocates. Sixty-six percent of the editors in the 1988 study and 64 percent of the news directors in the present study said victim groups had not been influential in setting their policies. However, a smaller percentage of news directors (36 percent) than editors (44 percent) believed their station or paper should contact victims and seek their opinions on crime story coverage.

In summary, the study found that news directors and those most affected by coverage of crime stories are far apart on what they consider to be proper coverage. It also indicates that news directors are more willing to compromise on stories involving sensitive **information** than stories involving dramatic but sensitive **photos**, and that television news has grappled less with the issues involving coverage of crime victims than newspapers have--or at least has been less willing to make concessions to the privacy rights of victims.

Table 1

Comparison of News Director and Victim Advocate Opinions
on Controversial Types of News Footage

	Percentages	
Situation	Television News Directors Who Agreed	Victim Advoca Who Agreed
Edit out film which might give address of family of murder victim	66% N=281	98% N=246
	Chi Square=124.77 DF=4 p<.001	
Use exclusive film of hysterical mother who has just learned that her children were killed in fire that destroyed her home	81% N=270	14% N=236
	Chi Square=247.26 DF=4 p<.001	
Use film of woman who escapes from hostage situation without her clothes, with her private parts covered only by a towel	59% N=274	5% N=245
	Chi Square=215.75 DF=4 p<.001	
Use film of suicide that occurred in a public place	18% N=280	9% N=243
	Chi Square=17.14 DF=4 p<.001	
Identify a rape victim in TV news stories when print media have already identified her	33% N=277	5% N=24
	Chi Square=74.13 DF=4 p<.001	
Identify a convenience store clerk who is a holdup victim and the suspects are still at large	44% N=270	4% N=237
	Chi Square=155.78 DF=4 p<.001	

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Table 2

Comparison of News Director and Victim Advocate Opinions on Controversial Types of News Footage

	Percentages	
Situation	Television News Directors Who Agreed	Victim Advoca Who Agree
Increased attention to the privacy rights of crime victims is a good thing	82% N=281	98% N=244
	Chi Square=130.07 DF=4 p<.001	
The trend toward broadcasting fewer names and addresses of crime victims interferes with the public's right to know	21% N=281	3% N=242
	Chi Square=144.30 DF=4 p<.001	
Victim support groups have been influential in shaping TV news policies on crime coverage	15% N=279	49% N=233
	Chi Square=86.49 DF=4 p<.001	
Concern for ratings and competitive pressures often outweigh concerns for victims in making decisions on broadcasting sensitive footage	26% N=278	85% N=240
	Chi Square=243.35 DF=4 p<.001	
Television news is less sensitive to victim privacy than other media	31% N=280	62% N=242
	Chi Square=87.31 DF=4 p<.001	
Broadcasting pictures of a murder victim taken at crime scene violates the family's privacy	13% N=280	90% N=244
	Chi Square=329.84 DF=4 p<.001	

REFERENCES

[1] Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque. "Newspaper Identification of Crime Victims: Editors Change Address Policies." Paper delivered at Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication national convention in Minneapolis, Minnesota, August, 1990, p. 2.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 2.

[3] Dan Lynch, "Victim's Names: Right to Know vs. Right to Privacy," *1983 APME Report* (Dallas: Associated Press managing Editors Professional Standards Committee, 1983), p. 6.

[4] Roy Peter Clark, "Covering Crime: Journalists Face Difficult Choices," in Tommy Thomason and Anantha Babbili, eds., *Crime Victims and the News Media* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University, 1987), p. 6.

[5] Ann Seymour, "Victim Advocate Suggests Code for Journalists," in *Crime Victims and the News Media*, *ibid*., pps. 31-32.

[6] American Society of Newspaper Editors, *Newspaper Credibility: Building Reader Trust* (Miami: American Society of Newspaper Editors, 1985), p. 16.

[7] Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque, *op*. *cit*.

[8] Laurence Zuckerman, "Knocking on Death's Door: In Covering Tragedies, Do Journalists Go Too Far?" *Time*, February 27, 1989, p. 49.

[9] Jeff Greenfield, "TV: The Medium Determines the Impact of Crime Stories," in Tommy Thomason and Anantha Babbili, eds., *Crime Victims and the News Media*, *op*. *cit*., pps. 19-23.

[10] Tommy Thomason and Paul LaRocque, *op*. *cit*., p. 6.

[11] *Ibid*., p. 5.

[12] *Ibid*., p. 10

ABSTRACT

Television and Crime Coverage:
A Comparison of the Attitudes of News Directors and Victim Advocates

Crime news has been a staple of the American news diet for more than 150 years. But only in the past decade have journalists begun to question seriously how they cover stories involving crime victims. These victims frequently allege that they are re-victimized by press coverage of their ordeal. Although crime victims complain about coverage in both print and electronic media, some claim that the aggressive behavior of television journalists and the graphic images of television news constitute the greatest invasion of their privacy and the most blatant exploitation of their personal tragedies.

This study compares the attitudes of television news directors with those of victim advocates (people active in crime victim support groups). Areas addressed include attitudes of both groups toward coverage of common types of crime stories and their opinions on key issues related to the right to know vs. the right to privacy.

The study documents significant differences between the two groups. Although 83 percent of news directors agreed that increased attention to the privacy rights of crime victims is a good thing, they often favored using film footage victim advocates said they considered offensive. Besides significant disagreement on hypothetical crime coverage situations, the two groups were also far apart on such policy issues as the effects of ratings and competition on decision-making, the influence of victim support groups on shaping TV news policies, TV's lack of sensitivity as compared to other media, and the advisability of broadcasters' seeking victims' opinions in crime story coverage.

The study also compares the responses of TV news directors to the authors' similar studies of newspaper managing editors, concluding that the news directors are less sensitive than the print journalists to the privacy concerns of victims.

Cultivation and exposure to television following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake[1]

John E. Newhagen[2]

College of Journalism
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
(301) 405-2417

Marion Lewenstein

Department of Communication
McClatchy Hall
Stanford University
Stanford, CA 94305
(415) 723-2300

July 28, 1991

A paper presented to the Radio and Television Journalism Division of The Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, MA.

---

[1] This research was funded by grants from the National Association of Broadcasters, and Marjorie and Robert Chandler.

[2] The authors would like to especially thank Steven Chaffee at the Institute for Communication Research at Stanford University for his help in the design and execution of the study. We also would like to thank Donald Roberts, also at the Institute for Communication Research at Stanford University for his help in the preparation of this report.

Abstract

Cultivation and exposure to television following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake

When asked to describe what they imagined the San Francisco Bay Area looked like two hours after the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake, survey respondents reported more images of destruction the longer the time period before their first viewing television, and less overall viewing. Further, how afraid respondents said they were was not correlated to the amount of viewing that first evening, but ratings of television credibility were correlated to how afraid respondents said they were.

We hypothesize that the images and sounds provided by television helped condense, refine, and organize memory for the disaster. This more parsimonious image of the effects of the disaster runs counter to what the cultivation hypothesis might predict. According to that hypothesis, fear would be correlated to an overestimation of the destruction as the result of increased viewing of images that overrepresented the actual extent of the damage. We propose an alternative explanation, that the quality of the highly salient and credible images, not the quantity of their presentation, served to anchor, validate, and strengthen associative memory schema for the event.

Introduction

The idea that television can affect a viewer's picture of the real world has been a source of active discussion for more than a decade. Gerbner and his associates at the Annenberg School of Communication first articulated the theory that television could "cultivate" a particular view of social reality (Gerbner et al., 1980). Despite criticism, the theory persists, perhaps because the social implications of the idea that a mass medium can define our culture is too important to dismiss. After more than 10 years of examination and reexamination of cultivation theory and method, researchers have come to two general conclusions: first, a weak cultivation effect does exist; and second, while the sociological implications of the theory are compelling, cultivation continues to want for an explanation of the underlying psychological process (see Hawkins et al., 1987; Potter, 1991a).

The Oct. 17, 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake that rocked the San Francisco Bay Area provided a unique opportunity to examine the capacity of television images to affect viewer memory and emotion. This paper will first outline some of the major theoretical and methodological issues surrounding cultivation theory, then propose a psychological explanation for the processing of television images of the earthquake.

Cultivation Effect Strength

The claim that "television makes specific and measurable contributions to viewers' conceptions of reality" (Gerbner et al., 1980, pg.10) is based on content analysis of television, called message system analysis, and comparing results of survey questions probing viewers' perception of social reality, called cultivation analysis. Cultivation theory states that the aggregation of television content yields a symbolic system, called the "television world," that can be compared to what exists in the "real world" (see Gerbner et al., 1985). However, simple and elegant this model might seem, it has come under rigorous methodological criticism since its proposal (see Comstock, 1982). Hirsch (1981) set the tone for the discussion when he reported the Annenberg team's findings were flawed because results were artifacts of regression effects, with linear trends disappearing in the presence of controls. He further stated that the "real world" survey questions used in the analysis did not truly correspond to the "TV world" content analysis categories to which they were compared. Much of the discussion of cultivation has centered on the question of whether results were too weak to claim any effect at all, or that a stronger effect has been masked by methodological flaws (Potter, 1991b). Potter accepts a weak general cultivation effect and suggests that time has come to go beyond whether the effect occurs and attempt to explain the "why and how."

Levels of Analysis and Content Homogeneity

A focal point of discussion about cultivation theory has to do with assumptions about the homogenous nature of both television content and the viewing experience. Cultivation theory is a social-level theory, that is, an analysis of a symbol system on society as a whole (Hawkins et al., 1987). Gerbner and his associates (1985) state that the theory "is not meant to determine what any individual viewer might see, but to assess ... aggregate patterns to which communities are exposed." The Annenberg team explicitly states that cultivation theory is based on the assumption that television content and the viewing experience are homogenous. The homogeneity assumption is defended by the claim that television messages are stable and ubiquitous. That position implies that if television is found to have a certain number of a category of events during some period of time, viewing any random message unit will result in exposure to a number of incidents of that category similar to the mean rate. Further, the homogeneity of viewing process, which is likened to a ritual, is defended on the grounds that time of day is the most important predictor of television viewing.

These assumptions are reminiscent of the ecological fallacy, that is, making assertions about individuals as the unit of analysis based on examination of groups or other aggregations (Langbein & Lichtman, 1988). Further, the homogeneity assumptions appear to have been made in an attempt to do something Gerbner and associates said was beyond the range of their theory, the explanation of individual differences. This is reflected in modifications to cultivation theory that focus on differences among viewers, such as education and viewing behaviors (Gerbner et al., 1985).

Cultivation and Television Image Processing

The assumption of television content homogeneity doesn't really withstand the rigor of common sense. For instance, how can differences in program ratings, or the emphasis on program descriptions in television listings be explained? (Hawkins & Pingree, 1981). Cable television, for instance, provides a broad range of programming at any time of the day or night, offering the choice of 60 channels or more. Hawkins and Pingree (1982) attempt to address this concern in their research by categorizing television according to program genre.

Yet, analysis of genre-based categories really does not solve the problem. While classifying television according to program genre might have considerable utility for programmers or production professionals, there is nothing that makes them intrinsically interesting to theory (Reeves, 1989). One danger in the adoption of production-based labels as variables is that their explication may not be made explicit. Indeed, despite the preoccupation with violence in action-adventure programs in cultivation research, none of the studies reviewed, including the original work done by the Annenberg team, specify how that particular genre is theoretically distinct from others. Hawkins and Pingree (1981) found significant correlations between social reality beliefs and children's viewing of cartoons, game shows, music/variety, drama, and news. They address the need for a more theory based examination of content, and call for future hypotheses to "consider formulas and conventions" common to program genre.

Image Quality: An information processing model of memory and attention allows for the examination of image quality as well as the sheer quantity of exposure in assessing cultivation effects. One explanation of why stronger cultivation effects appear in such apparently disparate genre as action adventures, cartoons, and game shows might have to do with the nature of the formal features of the images that populate them. In a review of cultivation research, Rule and Ferguson (1986) recognize that formal features may be driving attention and comprehension, and that violence programming is simply the genre which embodies them. Geiger and Reeves (1988) found fast pacing and scene changes affected viewer memory and attention. It is surely true that cartoons, action adventures, and game shows all rely heavily on such techniques to compel attention. Further, violent programming frequently contains visuals that evoke negative emotions. Such images also have been shown to compel attention and affect memory (see Newhagen & Reeves, 1991).

Hawkins and Pingree (1987) point out that acquisition of meaning from television is generally loosely specified as a "learning" process. They suggest that the process could be better described in terms of the repeated instantiation of some stereotype by their exemplars. They describe cultivation as a two step process: First order effects are quantitative assessments of occurrences and the acquisition of demographic information; Second order effects have to do with the generalization of that information to beliefs. Similarly, Shapiro (1988) conceptualizes cultivation as essentially a frequency assessment process that can best be understood in terms of a multiple trace model of memory.

Frequency Assessment and Knowledge Representation: Humans have evolved to cope with change, and human perceptual systems are designed to monitor the environment to detect change (Kosslyn, 1980). Hebb's (1949) pioneering work in pattern association conceived of the perceptual process as an ongoing comparison of an organism's mental model of reality with information from the environment. This process can be thought of as the comparison of two copies of information about the environment; one virtual, or mental, and the other real. This model of memory depicts a system of associative knowledge representations, or nodes, interconnected in networks (Anderson, 1985). When one node becomes active, that activation tends to spread to other nodes according to the strength of their connections (Collins & Loftus, 1988).

To reconcile a mismatch between the environment and mental expectations of it, the individual "learns" the nature of the new relationships and integrates them into existing network representations. Over repeated presentations of exemplars of an object or event, these networks come to represent the central tendency of the category, and ignore uncorrelated information as noise (McClelland & Rumelhart, 1987).

Frequency information is important for any memory structure representing some superordinate category (Kahneman, 1973). Information about the frequency of occurrence of an event or object provides for what Kahneman calls "perceptual readiness," and helps alert the individual to the presence of unknown, threatening, or novel stimuli. For instance, asking a respondent to remember the San Francisco Bay area after the earthquake, activates nodes associated with that experience. Activation will tend to spread across such a network according to the strength of the interconnections between the nodes.

An individual, then, tends to catalog information about a novel event or object in order to reconcile it with existing knowledge representations. For Gerbner's "mean world" hypotheses this means that information about violent crimes, as novel events, are cataloged into memory and subsequently used in the assessment of how likely the event might be. When asked about the likelihood of the occurrence of a violent crime, memory structures become active according to the strength of the network interconnections between nodes. Information about whether a particular violent depiction came from the "real world" or the "television world" may be lost because episodic memory about any specific event fades faster than attitudes distilled from them (Graber, 1988). Therefore, if the individual had been subjected to numerous repeated exposures to depictions of violent crimes on television due to heavy viewing, connection strengths would be expected to be strong, biasing the assessment of the likelihood of their actual occurrence.

For the case of the Loma Prieta earthquake, biased reporting of images of collapsed building, freeways, and bridges would be expected as television viewing increased to the degree the medium overrepresented their occurrence.

Fear and Salience in the Assessment Process: The center piece of cultivation theory is the "mean world" effect (Gerbner et al., 1985). The theory states that prolonged exposure to televised violence leads to the view that the real world is a more dangerous place than it really is. A great deal of discussion has focused on the index used to measure violence on television (Comstock, 1982). While this has been primarily a methodological discussion, an issue of equal importance is the theoretical specification of just what a violent image is and why it is salient to the viewer. An assumption critical to the cultivation hypothesis is that exposure to the depiction of a salient event will further amplify its assessment in a process called resonance. The "mean world" hypothesis assumes that violent criminal acts are in some way salient to viewers, without specifying why. To the degree that the earlier discussion of biased frequency assessment due to heavy television viewing was a quantity of exposure argument, the resonance of salient depictions argument has to do with the quality of exposure. "Resonance occurs when a feature of the television world has special salience for a group" (Gerbner et al., 1980).

From an information processing perspective highly salient and credible images of pain, death, or destruction have the "quality" of evoking negative emotions in the viewer that other images do not. Images of objects or events vary from instance to instance, and representations that are stable across a wide range of transformations are especially useful (Kosslyn, 1988). For a match to be made between the attributes represented in the pattern of information provided by an object and the pattern of information available in memory, the characteristic parts must be the same and the relations among the parts must be the same. Violations of these two conditions might explain why certain novel images compel viewing, particularly in instances associated with the threat of pain or death.

For this study compelling images were frequently represented by buildings or transportation conveyances crushed, destroyed, or engulfed in flames.

Television Images of the Loma Prieta Earthquake

For 15 seconds the afternoon of Oct. 17, 1989, San Francisco Bay Area residents were bound together by the common experience of a major earthquake. After only 20 minutes television viewers witnessed shocking images of fire and destruction, many beamed from a blimp hovering over the city to cover the baseball World Series. As soon as radio and television reestablished transmission after the ground quit shaking people rapidly turned to broadcast media for more information. Viewers witnessed images of four city blocks in the Marina district engulfed in flames, a section of the venerable Bay Bridge collapsed, and the top layer of the Cypress freeway structure pancaked on the lower level crushing scores of cars below.

A combination of the initial commonality of experience among residents and the ubiquitous nature of subsequent media coverage provided a unique opportunity to test the idea that viewing an event on television can lead to an overestimation of its effects in reality. Television news coverage of wars, civil mayhem, and natural disasters, such as the Loma Prieta earthquake, has been criticized because it tends to make things look worse then they really are (Nimmo & Combs, 1985), resulting in increased viewer fear and anxiety (Nisbett & Ross, 1980). This can be accomplished through the use of rapid cutting, fast pacing, (see Singer, 1980; Drew & Cadwell, 1985) and the selection of only the most graphic footage for high impact, rather than for viewer information gain (Berry et al., 1982). Indeed, images of the Marina fire, the collapsed Bay Bridge and Cypress freeway structure dominated early coverage, despite the fact damage and loss of life were nowhere near as extreme as those images suggested.

Linking Television Content to Viewer Exposure: The Loma Prieta earthquake provided an opportunity to address some methodological issues that have been mentioned concerning the cultivation hypotheses.

-- First, the earthquake provided a baseline experience of nearly equal salience across virtually the entire population of the San Francisco Bay Area. That is, no one anticipated the event, and the entire populace shared essentially the same initial experience based on those frightening first 15 seconds. This allows the opportunity to examine intervening variables, such as viewer education, that have come to dominate the discussion of the cultivation hypothesis.

-- Second, for the first 36 hours after the event, television content in fact was extremely homogenous. This was true for both content, with all available channels transmitting the same or similar images, and amount, with virtually all air time on all channels devoted to the disaster during the first evening and most of the time during the second day. That means linking television content to viewer disposition becomes much less problematic than in earlier studies. During those first hours after the earthquake if a person reported watching television, they watched news reports about the earthquake, because nothing else was being broadcast.

Predictions: A number of predictions generated by the cultivation hypothesis of television can be discussed in terms of the experience of the Loma Prieta earthquake:

H1: Cultivation theory predicts that heavy viewing of a class of behaviors or events on television should lead to an overestimation of the actual occurrence of those events. It would be predicted then, that increased television exposure after the earthquake would correspond to reporting more images of destruction and increased fear.

H2: Television coverage and actual events should "resonate" for a highly salient topic, leading to inflated damage assessments. Cultivation theory suggests a "double dose" effect when actual events reinforce television images. In the case of the earthquake, this should mean those individuals who both witnessed a large amount of real damage and viewed a large amount of television should have been particularly affected in their assessments of damage.

Methods

Data were collected employing a two-part survey; Part One included a series of free recall responses, and Part Two contained a series of closed ended responses. Data were gathered from 179 people from the San Francisco Bay Area four weeks after the October 17, 1989 earthquake. Ten trained interviewers rode the computer trains between Palo Alto and San Francisco, 35 miles to the north; and the ferries between San Francisco and Oakland, the east side of the Bay, in full or half-day shifts.

No special instructions were given to the interviewers about who to approach other than to attempt to alternate between male and female respondents. Interviewers asked respondents if they were willing to participate in a research study "on reactions to the recent Loma Prieta earthquake during the first 24 hours." The refusal rate was very low, perhaps for two reasons: first, people seemed genuinely eager to tell their own "earthquake story;" and second, on both the trains and boats respondents had from 30 to 40 undistracted minutes that would have otherwise been filled reading newspapers or simply gazing at the landscape.

Defining the actual population affected by the earthquake and drawing a probability sample from it was problematic in the sense that it did not correspond to any fixed geographic, political, or socially defined area. It can further be argued that the convenience sampling method employed had the advantage of reaching a socially and geographically diverse group, all of whom were witnesses to the event. Nevertheless, the sample obtained did tend to reflect regional population densities.

Part One: Free Image Recall

The first part of the survey employed a series of questions asking the respondents to recall events from the moment the ground quit shaking to bedtime the day after the earthquake, a period of 36 hours. This free recall portion of the survey was administered by eight college students and the principal investigators. The students were trained in interviewing and paid for their service.

Respondents were asked to report what they imagined the area looked like at the time of the earthquake, two hours after the ground quit shaking, when they went to bed the first night, and at bedtime the second day. Other free recall questions included how the respondents spent their time and how they were getting information about the effects of the earthquake. No mention of media was made until the last two questions of Part One, when respondents were asked if they had watched any television or listened to radio the night of the earthquake.

Part Two, Media Use

After administering Part One, interviewers handed the respondents Part Two with a stamped self-addressed envelope.

About 70 percent completed Part Two in time to be collected by the interviewers. Mail back response brought the total response rate to nearly 90 percent. Part Two asked more specific closed-ended questions about how long they were without power, and about their media exposure during the first 36 hours after the earthquake. It also included a series of questions using six point Likert scales asking respondents to assess television, radio, and newspaper credibility after the earthquake. The six-point scales also were used for responses about how afraid they were. More specific questions were asked about how anxious the presence or absence of media made them. A copy of both parts of the survey instrument can be seen in Appendix A.

Coding of Free Recall Data

Open-ended data from Part One were coded using a three-level treed category scheme leading to the creation of three-digit variables for each response. The first level corresponded to a set of general categories into which respondent mentions might fit. The second level corresponded to a set of more specific descriptions within the first category. In turn, the third level represented a yet more specific category derived from the second level category. For example, if a respondent named the collapsed Bay Bridge, the first digit would correspond to the general category "Thing," the second digit to the more specific "Specific Structure" category, and the third digit to the yet more specific category "Bay Bridge."

The actual category entries were derived by exhaustively cataloging specific references from 12 randomly selected surveys. The kind and type of mentions were used to derive the category headings for the final coding scheme. See Figure 1 for an example of the treed coding scheme. Coders also assessed the strength of the respondent's personal experience based on responses to Part One as "Strong," "Medium," or "Low."

A three-hour training session was held for the six coders employed in this phase of analysis. The coding scheme was first explained to them, each coded a randomly selected sample survey, and the results were discussed in a group session. The coding scheme was further refined based on insights gained from the coding session.

Inter-coder reliability was assessed by measuring agreement among coders as suggested by Stempel and Westley (1989). Each person coded one survey also coded by another member of the team. Three items on these double coded surveys were used to assess inter-coder agreement. Average agreement across all surveys was 92 percent, with a standard deviation of .08. The lowest agreement rate between any two coders on a particular survey was 69 percent, and the highest rate was 100 percent. A copy of the coding key can been seen in Appendix B.

Results

The dependent variables for this study included the number of images of destruction of the San Francisco bay area reported by respondents, and how afraid they recalled being after the earthquake. The independent variables for the study were the amount of television exposure, measured by the time of first exposure and the length of subsequent exposure, and television credibility as rated by the respondent. Third variables of interest to this study were the emotional strength of first hand experience.

Four time points were selected to probe respondent memory for images of the destruction caused by the earthquake; the moment the earth quit shaking, two hours after the event, at bedtime the first night, and at bedtime the second night. The selection of those four times was based on the following assumptions about media exposure:

1. Asking about images the moment the ground quit shaking would be a reflection of first-hand experience. In fact, less than 12 percent of the respondents reported having seen television within one hour after the event.

2. Two hours after the event, a large proportion would have gained access to media, while a sizable proportion still would not. Actually, 44 percent reported having seen television by this time.

3. At the end of the first evening a large portion of the population would have access to television. Indeed, by 1 a.m. 71

percent had watched television.

4. By bedtime the second evening, nearly everyone would have seen some television. By the end of the second night 95 percent reported having seen television.

Exposure to Radio: Of course, the other broadcast medium that would have been readily available to respondents was radio. But no relationship between the number of images reported and radio exposure were detected. Correlations were small and not statistically significant between exposure to radio, measured by asking respondents when they first heard radio reports, and how long they listened before going to bed the first evening, and the number of images reported. Further, there was little correlation between television and radio exposure. The time of first exposure to television and the amount of radio exposure the first evening were correlated ($R^2 = .29$, $p<.001$), indicating the later respondents began watching television, the more radio they heard the first evening. However, other comparisons, such as the time of first radio exposure and the time of first television exposure, or the amount of radio exposure and the amount of television exposure, were small and not statistically significant.

Images of Destruction, and Television Exposure

Variables were constructed from free recall data counting the total number of images respondents mentioned at each of the four time points. The number of images reported two hours after the ground quit shaking was correlated to both the length of time before the first television exposure ($R^2 = .19$, $p<.001$), and the amount of television exposure the first evening ($R^2 = -.17$, $p<.05$). Not surprisingly, the time respondents first reported seeing television was correlated with length of viewing the first night ($R^2=.25$, $p<.001$), as well as the second night ($R^2=.38$, $p<.001$).

The positive correlation for initial exposure means respondents reported _more_ images the _longer_ the time before watching television. The negative correlation for amount of viewing the first evening means respondents reported _more_ images the _less_ television they viewed the first night. This runs counter to the first part of Hypothesis 1, that increased exposure of television should lead to the report of an increased number of images of destruction.

Accounting for First-hand Experience

Interpretation of correlations alone cannot take into account the influence of possible third variables. Of particular concern for this analysis is the importance of first-hand experience. It might be expected that respondents in areas of greater damage would not have power restored, preventing them from access to television. This would provide an alternative explanation for why they reported more images of destruction, as they might have witnessed damage first hand, while not seeing the images of major structures such as bridges and freeways collapsed, available only on television.

First, it is interesting to note that the correlation between the restoration of power and the report of the first exposure to television was not particularly strong, albeit significant ($R^2 = -.11$, $p<.05$). This might be explained by the fact that 12 percent of the respondents had access to battery powered television and 17 percent went to a location that had a functioning receiver, thus circumventing the need for electric power.

One way to control for variance from third variables is to enter them into hierarchical regression models before other variables. This effectively parcels out their effects, with the partial correlations of subsequent variable accounting for their importance to the relationship with the dependent variable.

Two dependent variables were tested using hierarchical regressions, self reported fear caused by the earthquake, and the number of images reported two hours after the earthquake. Correlations between self-reported fear and coder assessment of the strength of the respondent's reaction were found to be statistically significant at all four time points; when the ground quit shaking ($R^2 = .35$, $p<.01$), two hours after the event ($R^2 = .33$, $p<.05$), at the end of the first night ($R^2 = .35$, $p<.05$), and at the end of the second night ($R^2 = .23$, $p<.05$).

The number of images reported two hours after the event was used because of the strength and direction correlations between fear, the number of images and media exposure at that time. This time period also is interesting because roughly half the respondents reported they had been exposed to television while the other half had not.

For both the fear and image models, the first independent variable entered into the equation was the strength of the respondent's first-hand experience, rated by survey coders judging respondents' report of damage and earth movement. The second block of variables entered into the two models included both the time of first television viewing and the duration of viewing the first night, which, as noted earlier, were found to be collinear.

Fear as the Dependent Variable: With respondent self report of how afraid they were as the dependent variable, first hand experience accounted for 23 percent of the variance. The amount of variance accounted for by television viewing was small, only 2 percent, and not statistically significant. This runs counter to Hypothesis 1, that increased viewing should result in increased fear. Table 1 presents the results.

Number of Images as the Dependent Variable: When the number of images reported two hours after the ground quit shaking was the dependent variable, the amount of variance explained by first-hand experience was only 2 percent, and not statistically significant. The television viewing, on the other hand, accounted for 41 percent of the variance, and was statistically significant. The direction of the partial correlations also runs counter to Hypothesis 1, that would predict the number of images reported would increase with increased television viewing. Table 2 presents regression results.

Image Salience and Television Credibility: High image credibility, and not the sheer number of the television images, might have accounted for increased respondent fear. The idea that "seeing is believing" has been shown to be one of the most important factors in the increase of television's credibility ratings over newspapers during the last 30 years (see Newhagen & Nass, 1989). In fact, respondents' credibility ratings of televised earthquake coverage and their reports of being afraid were positively correlated ($R^2 = .27$, $p<.001$). Further, television credibility accounted for 23 percent of the variance in a hierarchical regression with respondent fear the dependent variable, even after taking first hand experience into account. Table 3 presents regression results.

Event Salience and Television Exposure: Finally, Hypothesis 2, that a "double dose" of first hand experience and heavy television viewing should produce especially strong effects on the number of images and the amount of fear reported, was examined. Using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistic, the strength of first-hand experience was not a statistically significant predictor of the number of images reported after two hours. However, the length of exposure to television the first night and the strength of first hand experience were found to covary with the number of images reported after two hours (F (174,1,1) = 6.3, $p<.01$). Further, the ANOVA statistic showed that the length of exposure to television the first night and respondent fear were related (F (174,1,1) = 6.6, $p<.001$). In this case, however, there was no statistically significant covariation between the strength of first hand experience and the amount of television viewing the first evening.

These results tend only partially to support the "double dose" effect predicted by Hypothesis 2. On one hand, the number of images for those experiencing a strong first hand experience and seeing a large amount of television the first night was greater than for those who did not. On the other hand, the relationship between the strength of first hand experience and television viewing the first night did not carry over to the amount of reported fear. This is a further indication that some dimension of the television image, other than the sheer volume of exposure, accounted for increased viewer fear.

Conclusion

The 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake provided a unique opportunity to study the effects of viewing television on memory and emotion. The moment the ground began to shake, at 5:04 p.m. Oct. 17, the event became instantly salient for virtually the entire population of the San Francisco Bay Area. This can not always be said for other cataclysms and disasters; for even the most horrible battles, plane crashes, or even hurricanes, first-hand experience frequently varies widely between fairly small geographic areas. When television did become available, the content and amount of coverage of the event was extremely homogeneous on all local television channels for the first 36 hours. Both the kinds and amount of images the various stations had to broadcast were quite similar. A review of the local ABC network affiliate's broadcasts indicated that coverage the first evening was actually "seamless," without the intrusion of even a commercial.

These circumstances supported some of the most difficult assumptions made by Gerbner and his associates in the formulation of the cultivation hypothesis. First the earthquake represented a highly important issue for virtually all six million Bay Area residents for at least 36 hours, regardless of other demographic characteristics. The uniformity of coverage also made assumptions about the homogeneity of viewing and content less problematic.

The logic of the cultivation hypothesis can be examined in terms of an information processing model of memory. First, repeated exposures to a class of events or objects results in the storing of a generalized central tendency for that event, while memory for particular episodes might fade. An important feature of memory about an object or event is the frequency of occurrence. This is especially useful for stimuli that pose a threat to survival because they promote adaptive psychophysiological responses, such as fear. That is, seeing more occurrences of a threatening object or event on television will lead to an overestimation of its occurrence in reality and more fear about it.

But while respondents for this study who saw more television earlier reported fewer images of destruction, they reported being more afraid. An alternative explanation for the cultivation hypothesis is that the quality of the images on television, not simply the quantity, leads to increased reports of being afraid. The highly credible, believable, and emotionally compelling images of destruction seem to have helped verify and anchor the viewer's picture of the effects of the earthquake. Results supporting this conclusion were robust, even when the strength of first hand experience was taken into account. Correlational studies do not lend themselves to causal conclusions, and it could be argued that fear was driving television use instead of the reverse relationship. However, further analysis of these data, attempting to examine media channel selection and information seeking behaviors, did not show this to be the case .

The notion that frequency alone could not account for the number of images of destruction reported was further supported by testing the "double dose" hypothesis, that the combination of strong first hand experience and heavy television viewing should have especially strong effects. On one hand, there was no statistically significant interaction between first hand experience and the amount of exposure the first evening, when predicting the number of images reported two hours after the event, as would be expected. On the other hand, there was an interaction between first hand experience and television exposure, when predicting respondent fear. This suggests that some feature other than sheer exposure to the television image was driving respondent fear.

The work of Gerbner and his associates is but one example of research into the effects of television that tends to focus solely on the quantity of exposure. When image quality is discussed in terms of salience, the concept is not explicated in a way to make it useful as a variable. It seems a curious fact that so little research has focused on the quality of the television image when the power of the medium is so frequently discussed in those terms. If communication research is witnessing yet another round of increasing interest in the study of television effects, it might be useful to pay more attention to the nature of the quality of this complex stimulus.

References

Anderson, J. (1985). Cognitive psychology and its implications. New York: W.H. Freeman and Co.

Berry, C., Gunter, B., & Clifford, B. (1982). Research on television news. Bulletin of The British Psychological Society, 35, 301-304.

Collins, A., & Loftus, E. (1988). A spreading-activation theory of semantic processing. In A. Collins, & E. Smith, (Eds.), Readings in cognitive science: A perspective from psychology and artificial intelligence, pp. 126-136. San Mateo, CA: Morgan Kaufmann Publishers, Inc.

Comstock, G. (1982). Violence in television content: An overview. , 2. In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet, & J. Lazar, (Eds.), Television and behavior: Ten years of scientific progress and implications for the eighties, pp. 108-125. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Drew, D., & Cadwell, R. (1985). Some effects of video editing on perceptions of television news. Journalism Quarterly, 62, 828-831.

Geiger, S., & Reeves, B. (1988). The effects of scene changes and semantic relatedness on attention to television. Paper presented to the Mass Communication Division of the International Communication Association, San Francisco.

Gerbner, G. et al. (1980). The mainstreaming of America: Violence profile no. 11. Journal of Communication, 30, 10-29.

Gerbner, G., Gross, L., Morgan, M., & Signorielli, N. (1985). Living with television: The dynamics of the cultivation process. In J. Bryant, & D. Zillmann, (Eds.), Perspectives on Media effects, pp. 17-40. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Graber, D. (1988). Processing the news: How people tame the information tide 2nd edition. New York: Longman Inc.

Hawkins, R., & Pingree, S. (1981). Uniform messages and habitual viewing: Unnecessary assumption in social reality effects. Human Communication Research, 7, 4, 291-301.

Hawkins, R., & Pingree, S. (1982). Television's influence on social reality. In D. Pearl, L. Bouthilet, & J. Lazar, (Eds.), Television and behavior: Ten years of scientific progress and implication for the eighties, pp. 224-247. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Hawkins, R., Pingree, S., & Adler, I. (1987). Searching for cognitive processes in the cultivation effect: Adult and adolescent samples in the United States and Australia. *Human Communication Research*, *13*, 4, 553-577.

Hebb, D. (1949). *Organization of behavior*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Hirsch, P. (1981). Distinguishing good speculation from bad theory: Rejoinder to Gerbner et al. *Communication Research*, *8*, 1, 73-95.

Kahneman, D. (1973). *Attention and effort*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Kosslyn, S. (1980). *Image and Mind*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kosslyn, S. (1988). Imagery in learning. In Michael Gazzaniga, (Ed.), *Perspectives in memory research*, pp. 245-273. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.

Langbein, L. I., & Lichtman, A. (1978). Ecological inference. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publication.

McClelland, J. , & Rumelhart, D. (1987). A distributed model of human learning and memory. In J. McClelland, & David Rumelhart, (Eds.), *Parallel distributed processing: Explorations in the Microstructure of cognition*. Cambridge, MA: MA: The MIT Press.

Newhagen, J. E. (1989). Differential Criteria for evaluating credibility of newspapers and TV news. *Journalism Quarterly*, *66*, 2, 277-284.

Newhagen, J., & Reeves, B. (1991). This evening's bad news: Effects of compelling negative television news images on memory. A paper presented to the Information Systems Division of the International Communication Association annual conference, June, Chicago, IL.

Nimmo, D., & Combs, J. (1985). *Nightly horrors: Crisis coverage by television network news*. Knoxville, TN: The University of Tennessee Press.

Nisbett, R., & Ross, L. (1980). *Human inference: Strategies and shortcomings of social judgment*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Potter, J. (1991). The linearity assumption in cultivation research. *Human Communication Research*, *17*, 4, 562-583.

Potter, W. J. (1991). Examining cultivation from a psychological perspective. Communication Research, 18, 1, 77-102.

Reeves, B. (1989). Theories about news and theories about cognition: Arguments for a more radical separation. American Behavioral Scientist, 33, 2, 191-198.

Rule, B. G., & Ferguson, T. (1986). The effects of media violence on attitudes, emotion, and cognitions. Journal of Social Issues, 42, 3, 29-50.

Shapiro, M. (1988). A multiple-trace memory model of communication influence on world view. A paper presented to the International Communication Association Convention at New Orleans, LA.

Singer, J. (1980). The power and limitations of television: A cognitive-affective analysis. In P. Tannenbaum (Ed.), The Entertainment Functions of Television (pp.36-42). In P. Tannenbaum, (Ed.), The entertainment functions of television, pp. 36-42. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erbaum Associates.

Stempel, G., & Westley, B. (1989). Research methods in mass communication. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Table 1

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Fear,
First-hand Experience, and Television Viewing

	Beta	Sig.	Partial Correlation
First-hand Experience	-.23	.002	-.23
Time of First Television Exposure	.08	NS	.01
Length of Television Exposure	.06	NS	.01

Table 2

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Number of Images Reported,
First-hand Experience, and Television Viewing

	Beta	Sig.	Partial Correlation
First-hand Experience	-.02	NS	-.02
Time of First Television Exposure	-.23	.002	.19
Length of Television Exposure	.19	.01	-.21

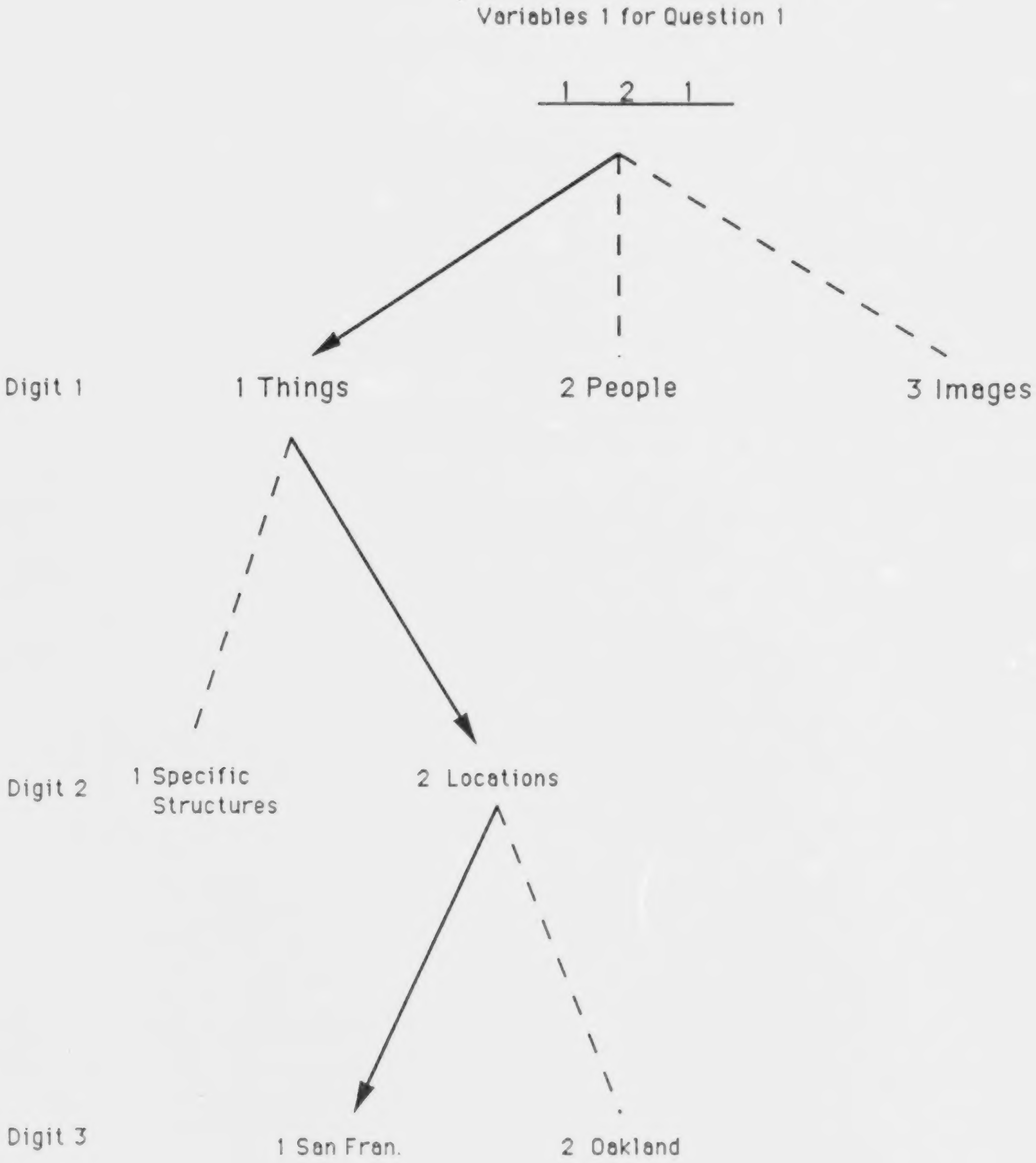
Table 3

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Fear,
First-hand Experience, and Television Credibility

	Beta	Sig.	Partial Correlation
First-hand Experience	-.20	.004	-.21
Television Credibility	.22	.001	.23

Figure 1

Open Ended Coding Scheme


Variables 1 for Question 1
1 2 1
Digit 1
1 Things
2 People
3 Images
Digit 2
1 Specific Structures
2 Locations
Digit 3
1 San Fran.
2 Oakland

Coding scheme for a mention of the San Francisco area in question one of Part 1. The variable takes on the value 121.

Appendix A

Stanford Earthquake Media Use Study
Questionnaire
Part 1

ID ___________

Thank you for your help. If you could just answer the following questions in a few words about events after the earthquake as best as you remember.

We want to stress that there are no right or wrong answers to the following questions, we are interested in your impression of what was going on for the first 24 hours after the earthquake.

1. Think back to the evening of the earthquake. After the ground quit shaking, describe to me the picture you had in mind of what happened in the Bay Area? I mean, what were people doing, how did the city look, details like that. We are interested in your first impressions.

2. What did you first worry about after the earthquake?

3. A little later in the evening, say two hours after the earthquake, did the picture in your head of what happened change? How?

Appendix A (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Study
Part 1

4. And later yet in the evening, say by the time you went to bed, what picture did you have in your mind of what the Bay Area looked like? Had that imaged changed again? How?

5. And by the evening of the next day, 24 hours or so after the earthquake, describe the picture you had then of what people were doing and how the city looked like.

6. How did you spend the evening after the earthquake?

7. How did you spend the next day following the earthquake?

Again, we want to stress that there are no right or wrong answers to the following questions, we are interested in your impression of what was going on for the first 24 hours after the earthquake.

8. What did you think the death toll was as a result of the earthquake right after it happened?

Appendix A (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Study
Part 1

9. How did you arrive at that figure?

10. How about two hours or so after the earthquake, what did you think the death toll was then?

11. How did you arrive at that figure?

12. And by the time you went to bed, how many people did you believe had died in the earthquake?

13. How did you arrive at that figure?

14. During the next day, how many people did you believe perished in the earthquake?

15. How did you arrive at that figure?

16. How many people do you currently believe died in the earthquake?

17. How did you arrive at that figure.

18. How did you first learn about the effects of the earthquake other than what you knew first hand?

19. As the evening progressed, how were you getting information about the effects of the earthquake?

20. And the next day, how were you getting information about the effects of the earthquake?

Appendix A (Cont.)

Stanford University Earthquake Media Use Study
Part 2

Thank you again for taking the time to participate in our study.

If you have time to complete the questions before the ferry docks, just return it to one of our interviewers. Otherwise, please place it in the stamped envelope attached to it and drop it in the mail after you have completed the questions.

If you have any questions concerning the study feel free to call John E. Newhagen at the Department of Communication, Stanford University, (415) 723 2300.

1. Did you have electric power after the earthquake?

Yes____
No ____

2. If you did not, about how many hours did it take before power was restored?

Hours _____

3. Did you hear any reports about the earthquake over the radio?

Yes ____
No ____

4. If you did, how long after the earthquake did you hear the first radio report?

Hours ____

During the evening of the earthquake about how many hours of earthquake news coverage did you listen to on the radio?

Hours ____

During the next day about how many hours of earthquake news coverage did you listen to on the radio?

Hours ____

Did you see any television news reports about the earthquake?

Yes ____
No ____

Appendix A (Cont.)

Was it a black and white or a color television?

Black and white ____
Color ____

If you did, how long after the earthquake did your see the first television report?

Hours ____

During the evening of the earthquake about how many hours of earthquake news coverage did you watch on the television?

Hours ____

During the next day, about how many hours of earthquake news coverage did you watch on the television?

Hours ____

Did you read any newspaper reports about the earthquake?

Yes _____
No _____

If you did, how long after the earthquake did you see the first newspaper report?

Hours ____

About how many hours of earthquake news coverage did you read in newspapers by the end of the next day?

Hours _____

Did you have to make any extra effort to get access to media that you would not normally have had to make? If so for which news sources was this true?

Television _____
Radio _____
Newspapers _____
Telephone _____

Where were you when the earthquake struck?

Appendix A (Cont.)

In just a few words, describe what were you doing?

Did you see any major damage caused by the earthquake firsthand by the end of the next day?

Yes _____
No _____

Score each with an X according to how believable you thought they were during the evening of the earthquake?

Radio

Very Believable

Not Very Believable

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

Television

Very Believable

Not Very Believable

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

Newspapers

Very Believable

Not Very Believable

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

About how many times in the last week did you watch the news on television?

Watch TV News ____

Was that:
More than usual ____
About normal ____
Less than usual ____

Appendix A (Cont.)

About how many times last week did you read a newspaper?

Read a Newspaper ____

Was that:
More than usual ____
About normal ____
Less than usual ____

About how many times last week did you listen to the news on the radio?

Listened on the radio ____

Was that:
More than usual ____
About normal ____
Less than ____

Were you afraid or agitated during the earthquake?

Very Afraid				Not Very Afraid

The evening after the earthquake, did media reports make you more or less afraid or agitated?

Newspapers

More Afraid		No More or Less		Less Afraid

Radio

More Afraid		No More or Less		Less Afraid

Appendix A (Cont.)

Television

More Afraid	No More or Less	Less Afraid

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

If you did not have access to media, or your access was restricted because of the blackout or any other reason, did not having media reports make you more afraid or agitated?

Newspapers

More Afraid	No More or Less	Less Afraid

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

Radio

More Afraid	No More or Less	Less Afraid

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

Television

More Afraid	No More or Less	Less Afraid

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

What were the most important reasons for you to attend to the media after the earthquake?

Curiosity about general information concerning the amount of damage and loss of life?

Very Important	No More or Less	Not Very Important

|__________|__________|__________|__________|__________|

Appendix A (Cont.)

Specific information about the condition of roads and buildings that might personally affect you?

Very Important		No More or Less		Not Very Important
______	______	______	______	______

Finally we would like to know a few things about you.

Gender:

Female ____
Male ____

Age:

Years ____

Education:

High School Graduate
Less than two years College
or other professional training

More than two years College
or professional training

Four year college degree

Post graduate study

Post graduate degree

Occupation: ______________________________

Residence:

East Bay _____
San Francisco _____
Peninsula _____
San Jose _____
Marin _____
Other (Please specify) ______________________________

Appendix B

Stanford Earthquake Media Study
Coding Key

Questions 1, 4, 5, 6

- 1 = Things
  - 1 = Specific Structures
    - 1 = Bay Bridge
    - 2 = Marina
    - 3 = Hillsdale
    - 4 = Cypress, I-880
    - 5 = Bart
    - 6 = Candlestick
    - 7 = Traffic
  - 2 = Localities
    - 1 = San Francisco
    - 2 = Oakland
    - 3 = Watsonville
    - 4 = San Jose
    - 5 = Santa Cruz
  - 3 = General
    - 1 = Bridges
    - 2 = Freeways
    - 3 = Buildings
  - 4 = Comparison
    - 1 = Specific
    - 2 = General

- 2 = People
  - 1 = Actions
    - 1 = Panic
    - 2 = Death, Injury, Damage
    - 3 = Inconvenienced
    - 4 = Calm
  - 2 = Identified
    - 1 = Known (family, friends)
    - 2 = Unknown
    - 3 = Groups

- 3 = Images
  - 1 = Visual
    - 1 = Fire
    - 2 = Smoke - Dust
    - 3 = Collapse - (Rubble)
    - 4 = Blackout - (Darkness)
    - 5 = Traffic jams
  - 2 = Sounds, other
    - 1 = Smell - (Smoke)
    - 2 = Quiet
    - 3 = Emergency vehicles
    - 4 = Rumble (of quake)

- 4 = Personal Reaction
  - 1 = Strong
  - 2 = Medium
  - 3 = Low

- 5 = Nothing
  - 1 = Nothing
    - 1 = Nothing

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Study
Coder's Key

General Codes

999 = Missing data, Bad data, No Response

000 = Don't Know

8 = Other

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Study
Coder's Key

Questions 2, 3

1 = Other People	1 = Family Friends	1 = Check on physically 2 = Contact (Phone) 3 = Worry About
	2 = Neighbors	1 = Check on physically 2 = Contact (Phone) 3 = Worry About
	3 = Others	1 = Check on physically 2 = Contact (Phone) 3 = Worry About
2 = Self	1 = Physical	1 = Move to safety 2 = Secure environment 3 = Undirected Activity 4 = Go home 5 = How to get home 6 = My home
	2 = Mental	1 = Surprise 2 = Depersonalized 3 = Reflective 4 = Fear, Shock, Death
3 = Things	1 = General	1 = Bridges 2 = Buildings 3 = Roads 4 = Everywhere, Other
	2 = Specific	1 = Immediate surrounding 2 = Named Object (bridge) 3 = Named Locations 4 = Comparisons
4 = Nothing	1 = Nothing	1 = Nothing

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Use Study
Coder's Key

Questions 7,8

1 = Communicate	1 = Talk in person	1 = Family, friend, etc
		2 = visit family, friend
		3 = others visit me
	2 = Phone	1 = local
		2 = long distance
2 = Restore order	1 = Clean up	1 = home
		2 = work
		3 = both
	2 = Safety	1 = home
		2 = work
		3 = Recall Instructions
		4 = Get Home, Work
3 = Tension reduction	1 = Media	1 = TV
		2 = Radio
		3 = Newspapers
		4 = Radio and TV
		5 = All media
		6 = Avoided media
	2 = Be with others	1 = Family, friends
		2 = Outside
	3 = Activity	1 = Drink, smoke
		2 = Party
		3 = Sit
4 = Information seeking	1 = Investigate	1 = San Francisco
		2 = Cypress
		3 = Marina
		4 = Own Neighborhood
	2 = Contact Others	1 = Phone
		2 = In person
	3 = Media	1 = TV
		2 = Radio
		3 = Newspapers
		4 = TV and Radio
		5 = TV and Newspapers
		6 = Radio and Newspapers
		7 = All Media
5 = Nothing special	1 = Nothing	1 = Nothing

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Use Study
Coder's Key

Question 9, 11, 13, 15, 17

1 = 0
2 = Less than 100
3 = 101 to 300
4 = 301 to 500
5 = 501 to 1,000
6 = More than 1,000

Questions 10, 12, 14, 16, 18

1 = Non Media	1 = Guess 2 = Eye Witness 3 = Reports from others
2 = Media	1 = Television 2 = Radio 3 = Newspapers 4 = Radio and Television 5 = Radio and Newspapers 6 = TV and Newspapers 7 = All media

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Use Study
Coder's Key

Questions 22, 23

- 1 = Anxiety Level
  - 1 = More Anxious
    - 1 = Specific event
    - 2 = Travel info
    - 3 = General info
    - 4 = After shocks
    - 5 = Family Info
  - 2 = Less Anxious
    - 1 = Specific event
    - 2 = Travel info
    - 3 = General info
    - 4 = After shocks
    - 5 = Family Info
  - 4 = Neither
    - 1 = Specific event
    - 2 = Travel info
    - 3 = General info
    - 4 = After shocks
    - 5 = Family Info
- 2 = Source
  - 1 = People
    - 1 = Expert official
    - 2 = Rumors
  - 2 = Media
    - 1 = Television
    - 2 = Radio
    - 3 = Newspapers
    - 4 = TV and Radio
    - 5 = All Three
  - 3 = Not Having
    - 1 = TV
    - 2 = Radio
    - 3 = TV or Radio
    - 4 = Newspaper
    - 5 = All Three
    - 6 = Telephone
    - 7 = Power

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Study
Coding Key

First Hand Experience

1 = Big One	1 = Witnessed major damage 2 = Felt major movement 3 = Both
2 = Moderate	1 = Saw some damage 2 = Felt some movement 3 = Both
3 = Low	1 = Did not see damage 2 = Did not feel movement 3 = Both

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Use Study
Coder's Key

Questions 24, 25

1 = Went Out
1 = to ask people/ to phone
2 = to see TV
3 = to listen to radio
4 = to buy batteries for portable TV or Radio
5 = other

2 = At home
1 = phoned
2 = turned on TV
3 = turned on Radio
4 = TV and Radio
5 = All media (including newspapers)
6 = Nothing
7 = Other

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Use Study
Coder's Key

Questions 24, 25

- 1 = Went Out
  - 1 = to ask people/ to phone
  - 2 = to see TV
  - 3 = to listen to radio
  - 4 = to buy batteries for portable TV or Radio·
  - 5 = other
- 2 = At home
  - 1 = phoned
  - 2 = turned on TV
  - 3 = turned on Radio
  - 4 = TV and Radio
  - 5 = All media (including newspapers)
  - 6 = Nothing
  - 7 = Other

Appendix B (Cont.)

Stanford Earthquake Media Use Study
Coder's Key

Questions 19, 20, 21

- 1 = Non Media
    - 1 = Guess
    - 2 = Eye Witness
    - 3 = Reports from others
- 2 = Media
    - 1 = Television
    - 2 = Radio
    - 3 = Newspapers
    - 4 = Radio and Television
    - 5 = Radio and Newspapers
    - 6 = TV and Newspapers
    - 7 = All media

Television and the Family: A Qualitative Study

A paper presented at the AEJMC annual conference in Boston, August 7-10, 1991

Radio-TV Journalism Division

by Charles Lewis
Assistant Professor
Mass Communications Institute
P. O. Box 39
Mankato State University

Television and the Family: A Qualitative Study

Until recently, researchers have rarely explored the family context in relation to mass media, but have instead simply identify research subjects as individuals situated within a family. For example, most of the large number of studies concerning children and television focus on the *effects* television has on the *individual* child, according to certain variables such as the child's socioeconomic class and the type of television programming viewed. Quantitative methods are nearly always used in this type of research — surveys and experiments combined with statistical analyses predominate. The general theoretical assumption underlying this research is what James Carey calls the "transmission view of communication." Communication in this sense is defined as "imparting, sending, transmitting or giving information to others."[1] The transmission model assumes communication is a personal process.

Carey offers an alternative to the transmission model — his "ritual view of communication." According to the ritual view, mass media research solely based on the transmission model may be packaged neatly, but runs the serious risk of analytical fallacy. In short, it is likely that in many situations there is much more going on in communication than the transmission model indicates. The transmission view may present part of the picture, but it inherently represents itself as presenting the whole picture. In the ritual model, communication is not considered a personal process, but a *social* process. Carey links ritual communication with such terms as "sharing, participation, association, fellowship and the possession of a common faith."[2] In other words, in the ritual view, meanings are not just "transmitted" from one source to another. Instead, communication is a *process* through which meanings are generated through negotiations based on shared understandings. And shared understandings depend on the cultural and social contexts people are situated in. Therefore, in the ritual view of communication, the *process* of generating meanings and the *context* in which this happens become central to the analysis.

Theory and Methods

Like so many of the transmission-oriented studies concerning television and the audience, my research focuses on aspects of television and the concept of the traditional American family (parents and children in a household). However, unlike the traditional effects researcher, my general theoretical framework is based on Carey's ritual model of communication. Because of this, I used the ethnographic methods of overt participant observation and in-depth interviewing. While numerous television audience studies have been conducted since the advent of television as a powerful form of mass communication, few researchers have used ethnographic theory, methods and analysis in television audience studies. Little qualitative research has been conducted in this area.[3]

Family interaction, at least in American culture, is ideally based on concepts and behaviors such as a loving sense of affinity among members; concern for mutual well-being; and the process of procreation, which involves, among other things, teaching children to become competent adults. In conjunction with this, no one doubts that television is a powerful force in American family life — it is simply too pervasive in many families not to be. Nielson reports that more than 98 percent of American households have at least one television set, and most families have two or more television sets. According to Nielson's quantitative research, the average American "watches" more than seven hours of television a day, and television ranks as the top pasttime for children.[4]

---

[1] James W. Carey, "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication* 2 (1975), p. 3.

[2] Ibid., pp. 6-7.

[3] For some of the more recent studies concerning television viewing which claim to be ethnographic in method and/or theory, see David Morley, *The Nationwide Audience* (British Film Institute, 1980); James Lull, "The Social Uses of Television," *Human Communication Research* 6: 3 (Spring 1980); James Lull, "How Families Select TV Programmes: A Mass Observational Study," *Journal of Broadcasting* 26: 4 (Fall 1982); Irene F. Goodman, "Television's Role in Family Interaction," *Journal of Broadcasting* 4: 2 (June 1983); Zolinda Stoneman and Gene H. Brody, "Family Interactions during Three Programs," *Journal of Broadcasting* 4: 2 (June 1983); and David Morley, *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure* (New York: Routledge, 1986). Also, see the June 1990 issue of *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 7: 2 for a series of detailed explorations of the issues in interpretive mass media audience research and theory.

[4] Stan Le Roy Wilson, *Mass Media, Mass Culture* (New York: Random House, 1989), pp. 216-217. Although I consider such statistics important, I hesitate to employ the loose language of Nielson researchers. For

Therefore, my research questions are focused on how family members integrate television into the kinds of activites families are involved in — how television becomes a part of family functions. Although other research may indicate that television actually generates certain behaviors, I am more concerned with how patterns of behaviors *extend into* television viewing. I hypothesize that television can be strongly linked to important social processes within the family — in particular, the negotiation of power relationships and the maturation of children. In following Glaser and Strauss' strategies for generating theory in qualitative research,[5] I have formulated two theoretical questions from my data:

1. How is television used by family members to reflect or influence power relationships within the family?
2. In conjunction with this, how is television a part of a child's socialization into adult roles?

My research indicates some interesting answers to these questions. However, it must be understood that this is a pilot study — the conclusions reached here cannot be generalized. They do, however, provide a basis for further research, assuming other hardy "naturalist" communications researchers are willing to enter the "field" of the American home.

Over a five-week period in October and November of 1989, I spent approximately 30 hours observing a family of four in their home during different time periods and on different days of the week.[6] Each observation period lasted approximately two and a half hours. In addition, I interviewed the family members after I finished the observation portion of my study. The interviews, which were tape recorded and transcribed, were conducted in small focus-group fashion — the adults were interviewed together in one sitting; the children were interviewed together in another sitting.

Obviously, my presence during observation periods was noted by family members. For example, Katie (the female child in the family) on several occasions asked me what I was "writing now" when I was jotting in my notebook. However, despite the fact that I could not help being somewhat obtrusive, I do not consider my presence to have altered the normal behaviors of the family members to any significant degree. On several occasions I asked members of the household if they thought my presence changed what they do and the way they do things. Usually I was assured that I was not affecting behaviors. Only once was I told that my presence affected behaviors — when it was said that they "toned down the earthy humor a bit when I was around." Comments towards the end of my observation period indicated that my presence had little effect on behaviors — I was told several times on different occasions by Rich (the adult male of the home) that he was "getting used to me being around" or something similar.[7]

Description of Family Members and the Home Environment

The family lives in a suburban area of the Minneapolis/St. Paul area and is composed of four people. Mary and Rich were married 13 years ago. Rich, 36, at present works as a computer programmer for an airline. Mary, 32, works part-time as an in-home aide for retarded adults. Mary is also a part-time professional seamstress. Both Mary

---

example, when it is said that the "average" person "watches" seven hours a day, what does this mean? What sort of day-to-day situations do people watch all this television in? What does "watching" really mean? When it is stated television viewing is the average child's "top pastime," what is this really telling us? What are children doing when the television is on? What does television mean to children? The statistics indicate the television is powerful, but not how or why it is powerful.

[5] Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitiative Research* (New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967)

[6] The only day of the week that I never was able to observe the family was Saturday. Concerning time periods, I never observed during early morning or late night. Most of the observations were in the afternoon and evening hours. I was able to question members about activites during time periods when I could not observe. I suppose the ideal would be to observe the family 24 hours a day for a lengthy period, but this was not possible. In any case, I was able to take extensive notes while in the field, and I always typed into a computer a more complete version of these notes each time after leaving the site. Therefore, I have no doubt that my quoted material is accurate and descriptions not marred by a faulty memory.

[7] Pseudonyms are used throughout this paper for names of all informants.

and Rich were reared on farms located near small communities in southwestern Minnesota.

The couple has two children. Jesse is 12 years old and in sixth grade. Katie is 8 years old and in third grade. Each attends classes in the public school system. Katie appears to be more social — a "people person." She often plays with other neighborhood children. Jesse is less social; he often would rather be alone and involved in reading, playing video games or other singular activites. During formal and informal interviews, both parents confirmed these observations concerning the social dispositions of their children. In addition, the adults appear to parallel their children along these lines. Mary tends to be more social — she is generally quite talkative in social situations. Rich is less so.

The family lives in a 20-year-old rambler with an attached two-car garage in a quiet, middle-class suburban neighborhood. They bought the home and moved into it only last August. Before that they lived in a townhome for several years. On their winding three- or four-block street, each lot is occupied by a rambler of a similar style and age. All appear to be well-kept. Many trees surround the houses and line the street. Only two blocks away is the area mall and the "strip" — the main county road through the suburb — with its assortment of restaurants, car dealerships and other service-oriented businesses. The parents are pleased with the area school system.

The house is not particularly large, but it does have three bedrooms, two baths and a finished basement. Inside, one finds a varied collection of color schemes and furnishings. The easy chairs and couch in the living room do not match, but are color coordinated. An open dining room connects with the kitchen and living room areas. Opposite the dining room area is a hallway which connects the kitchen and living room areas to the bedrooms and upstairs bathrooms. While the livingroom upstairs has a television set in it, the space appears to be more of a "sitting room" when compared to the family room downstairs. For example, the furniture appears to be newer upstairs, and the TV in the livingroom appears to be the "spare" or secondary set — it is an older model black and white 19-inch set on a wooden stand. It sits at an angle, connected to cable, in front of an antique secretary that is anchoring a corner of the living room. The black and white set is situated so that it can be seen from the dining room table. Often it is moved from the living room to Mary's sewing room when she is working and then returned to the living room when she is not working.

An open stairway between the living room and dining room connects the upstairs with the downstairs. The stairway leads directly to the carpeted family room of the basement. This is the room where most television activity takes place. The main television, a 19-inch, two to three year old color set, is in the basement. Both television sets are connected to cable. The family room color set is part of an entertainment center which also houses a newer-model VCR and Nintendo video game machine. The lower shelves of the center contain a set of encyclopedias. Knick Knacks and a few VHS tapes are placed on the top shelves of the center. Directly across from the entertainment center is a somewhat worn couch, an easy chair and ottoman A fireplace and another easy chair are situated at one end of the room. Occupying the other end of the room is a large, dining-room type wooden table and four hard chairs. In front of the couch is a large trunk-like wooden box which serves as a coffee table. Nintendo magazines, the weekly TV guide from the newspaper and the remote for the VCR and television are usually on the trunk.

According to my observations, one of the two television sets is usually on during the day and evening, whether anyone appears to be paying attention to it or not. Many times I observed family members leave the family room and not turn the color set off. One evening, while conversing with Rich and Katie, each commented on the pervasiveness of television in their home: Rich said that the television is "running all the time — I can't find a time when it isn't." Katie agreed with this — she said, "There isn't any time when it isn't on." Rich then said, "there must be a time when we aren't watching — when we're sleeping!" None of the family members apparently considers television watching to be a disreputable or potentially damaging activity.

The most used rooms in the house are the family room and the living room — those rooms which contain televisions. Next is the dining room, from which one can view the black and white television, assuming it is in the living room. Thus, the most frequent pattern of movement around the house is to/from the living or dining room from/to the family room. Of couse, activites other than television "watching" take place in these rooms. For example, homework and other projects are worked on at the tables in the dining room and family room; Jesse practices his trombone in the family room; Rich reads books and the newspaper in the dining and living rooms; and so on. Thus, television becomes a part of many family activites to which it is not directly related.

Family Power Relationship and the Television

In using the ritual view, I assume that television is more than an electronic box which people watch as a form of recreation. It is more than a conveyor of programs which reputedly have "effects" on people. Television often is at the center of family dynamics; therefore it must be a part of these dynamics. According to my observations, the activity of television viewing is itself an arena in which many family relationships are played out. For example, the rules for television use indicate the sometimes fluctuating hierarchy of power in the family. It appears that family members implicitly recognize this; thus the parents of the family I observed have constructed rules about television use which enforce ideal power relationships — egalitarian in nature. But just as often as egalitarian rules are enforced, they are also broken. The television then becomes a tool of leverage — a way to change the power structure so that it favors a particular family member. Therefore, through negotiating control of the television, family members play out ideal power relationships as well as actual power relationships.

Television and the Enforcement of Equality

Individuality and equality are ideals that are strongly encouraged in the Wilson family. This is apparent in several patterns of behavior, some of which are directly connected to television and some of which are not. Those related to television viewing center around an assortment of implicit and explicit "rules" concerning use and control of the television which reinforce their egalitarian ideal. The *television* is often used by the Wilsons to reflect or influence the ideal of power parity within the family.

One apparently implicit rule is that each family member has the right to watch his or/her most favorite programs — and each of them has favorites which are for the most part quite different in genre and style from those of other family members. In addition, family members, as a general rule, do not particularly care for each others' favorite programs. Rich's favorite prime time program by far is 'Dallas', which he said he has been watching since "halfway through the first season." While Katie claims to like the show, Jesse said in the interview: "I don't like ('Dallas') that much." Mary apparently isn't overly fond of it either; Rich said that "she was never quite a true fan." Still, 'Dallas' is tuned in on the color television in the family room every Friday evening. Mary said it best: "'Dallas' is like church — we plan our week around it." Usually the children watch the show with Rich; Mary is often working and misses it. Rich's other favorite programs are televised professional football and baseball games, usually involving the Minnesota Vikings or Twins. According to Mary, "When the Vikings are on, the world stops."

Mary's favorite shows are all grouped in one particular genre — tabloid journalism. Mary, if she is not working outside the home, usually watches several of these of these shows during the week.[8] 'A Current Affair', 'Unsolved Mysteries' and 'America's Most Wanted' were three of the tabloid shows most often mentioned by various family members as Mary's favorites. Rich and the children apparently watch these shows with Mary quite often, but none of the three expressed much affection for the shows. In fact, during the interview I asked the children if there were shows they thought their parents should watch less of. Jesse replied that he did not like 'A Current Affair' and "my mom doesn't have to watch that." Katie replied she thought her mother should watch less of "'A Current Affair' — and all those Mystery Shows." Although Mary claimed Rich likes the tabloid shows, he on several occasions criticized them for being sensational. He said more than once that he could not trust the information these shows presented and would hesitate to use any of it as "facts" in a conversation.

Jesse said his favorite program is a cartoon on at 8 a.m. every Saturday called 'Captain and the Game Master' — it is "mainly about Nintendo." Although I did not observe this, I assume Katie does not care for Jesse's cartoon and may not watch it with him. More than once she said she did not like Nintendo video games — once she said she "can't even get past the first level of 'Mario Brothers'." And because of the time slot and subject matter, it is unlikely his parents watch the show with him. In fact, I doubt they know what it is. Mary and Rich said Jesse's favorite show was 'Married with Children'. But during the interview, Jesse said this was his "second favorite" with the cartoon his first choice. The family does usually watch 'Married with Children' with Jesse, and all appear to enjoy it. Katie's favorite shows are 'Kids Incorporated', an afternoon children's show featuring an adolescent rock group, and 'The Patty Duke Show', a syndicated rerun on the Nickelodeon cable channel. Jesse considers 'Kids Incorporated' to be "one of the dumbest things" he has seen; he also says 'The Patty Duke Show' is "sick." Except for Katie, none of the other family members expresses much interest in either of her favorites.

---

[8] I was not able to observe this often, but was told this in conversations and the interviews.

Therefore, each family member is able to frequently celebrate his or her individuality through program choice. An unwritten rule allows for the viewing of a particular member's favorite show, even though other family members may not approve. However, no family member is allowed to exercise more than his or her share of control over the television. There are two explicit rules in particular which regulate this area of television equality. One rule is that Rich's viewing of sports is limited; the other rule is that the children must share control of the color television.

Concerning Rich's viewing of sports, it is likely that if Rich were allowed, he would watch a great many more sporting events that he does now — and thus would interact with his family less and control the television much more than he does now. During the interview I asked Rich: "If you were all alone, would you watch TV differently?" Rich replied: "Man, I'd watch a lot of football and a lot of baseball." The couple agrees that Mary limits Rich to one game a week during football season and perhaps two to three games a week during baseball season. Rich accepts this, although grudgingly. If Mary is gone or busy and away from one of the television sets, Rich will sometimes try to "sneak" in some extra sports viewing. Rich and I talked about this rule several times during the periods I would observe the family when Mary was working and out of the house. The following is one of many of such conversations:

> ... Rich says it's too bad Mary is not working tomorrow night, because the Florida Seminoles, a football team he likes to watch, are playing on ESPN (meaning, I think, he could get away with watching it if Mary were gone). He then laughs ... Rich asks me if I will watch the Bears play football Sunday afternoon since the Vikings are on Monday night. ... I say I might ... I tell Rich he can come over and watch with me, if he would like to. He says he'd "have to give Mary some excuse." He says Mary "will make me work my butt off so I can watch the game Monday." He pauses and the adds: "You know, it used to be that women would withhold sex — I don't mind that, but when they withhold football!" We both laugh.

I observed Mary and Rich often bantering back and forth over this rule. The playfulness in their dialogue is used, I believe, to dissipate the underlying tension both feel. Rich truly does not like the rule — and Mary truly does not like the idea of Rich watching hours and hours of sports. The following exchange, although lengthier than most similar conversations I observed, is typical of their sports rule banter:

> Researcher: *So you have a little difference of opinion when it comes to sports?*
>
> Rich: Ya, really, I'm limited. ... You know, I sure could have stood to watch the second game today of the doubleheader.
>
> Mary: What? (loudly)
>
> Rich: ...the Rams and the Giants — that'd have been a hell of a good game. (Mary laughs.) But I understood that Mary doesn't want me watching football for six hours in a row.
>
> Mary: You're sick. I think you should go into therapy. We've got to do something about that — that can be taken care of. ...
>
> Rich: I wonder what it is? It's like the husband is not responsive to the wife at that time. It's like 'leave me alone I want to watch the game'.
>
> Mary: Ya, but there's different times when the wife can get back at him and not be responsive too! (They laugh.)
>
> Rich: We don't fight over television except for sports, and I'm just limited to one football game a week.
>
> Mary: He's damn lucky he gets that. (She laughs.)
>
> Rich: It's like I don't dare push it beyond that, but I'll be damned if I'm not going to watch the Vikings.

> Researcher: *How about baseball?*
>
> Rich: Now that's a bad one, cause I like to watch two or three games a week.
>
> Mary: Every damn game is the fall classic — oh, that makes me mad. There's some big title that goes with every game. Who's playing doesn't matter.
>
> Rich: I don' know — it's like, ah, the first game of the season, a crucial series, the all-star game, the playoffs, and, of course, the World Series — the fall classic. I used to fool her at first; I'd say this is the fall classic, and she was kind of impressed — she'd think 'this is the fall classic so it must be pretty good!' But she got wise to that.

This last section of the exchange is an example of another way Rich would try to "sneak" in more sports — by claiming a particular game was unusually important. Usually, however, Rich does not try to sneak in more sports programming. According to my observations, he abides by the rule nearly all the time — even when Mary is absent. The children may be a factor here. They as well as the adults are aware of the sports rule and may help enforce the rule when Mary is gone. Twice on different occasions I observed Katie admonishing her father for stopping at a football game while channel searching. For example:

> Rich settles into the easy chair by the couch in the family room and puts his feet up on the ottoman. Katie sits down with her homework by the table in the eay chair, her back facing away from Rich and the television. Mary heads into the sewing room to get some sewing materials — she plans to work while she watches TV in the family room. Rich grabs the remote and turns to Monday Night Football. Katie, who is not even looking towards the TV, says "Dad ..." reproachfully. Mary then yells in from the sewing room that Rich should "turn the channel." Mary comes into the family room, and Rich immeditaely turns the channel to a CNN interview.

The other explicit control-related rule — that the children must share control of the color television — was constructed by the parents and has been in place since before the family moved to their new home. Through this rule Mary and Rich exert what they often hold in check — their ultimate parental power over the children.[9] They exert power, however, to enforce power parity among Jesse and Katie. According to the sharing rule, the children are allowed to watch the main color television each weekday from soon after they get home from school, which is 3 to 3:30 p.m., until 6 p.m. or 7 p.m. and on other days and times depending on their parents' viewing schedules.

The children each are allowed to control the television in alternating half-hour segments — Jesse's control period starts on the half hour; Katie's starts on the hour. Sometimes they negotiate and watch longer programs together, but more often one of them chooses a show without considering whether the other enjoys it or not. The other child can then either watch a show he or she cares little about, go upstairs and watch the black and white set if it is available, or find something else to do. Jesse often uses his television time to play Nintendo; Katie, to Jesse's joy, often does not use her time slots after school; instead she leaves the house to play with friends. Jesse then has complete control of the color television over lengthy periods. If Katie misses her slots, she does not get to make them up, but she apparently does have the right to come in any time during one of her slots and control the television, even if Jesse is in the middle of watching something. Both children are very aware of the sharing rule and generally abide by it. I observed the relatively peaceful change of television control several times. The following is an example:

> ... Katie comes back, apparently knowing it is 4 p.m. and her turn at the TV.

---

[9] Another important implicit rule is that *all* the egalitarian rules related to equality among adults and children can be overridden by the adults if they feel the situation calls for it. All in the family understand that ultimate power resides with the parents. In the case of enforcing the children's equal control of the television, the parents are suspending their own construction of power parity with the children — however, their ideals of equality and individuality are still being enforced by the very rule they are imposing on the children. What is interesting is when the adults suspend power parity between themselves and the children and ignore completely the ideals of equality and individuality. This will be covered in the next section.

> She does not even look for the remote; she switches the TV channels by standing by the entertainment center and using the VCR. She turns to 'Kids Incorporated'. ... Jesse remains seated in the easy chair. He does not protest her taking control, but does say, while staring at the TV with a tootsie pop hanging out of his mouth, "This is one of the dumbest things — all they do is play other people's songs." Katie sits down in front of the ottoman, her head only two feet in front of the screen. She watches closely. ... At 4:28 Katie stands up and starts channel searching by using the buttons on the VCR machine. As soon as she had stopped at a channel and settled back down in front of the ottomam, Jesse picks up the remote and starts channel searching. Katie crys out: "Jeese! It's still my turn!" Then, as she sees the clock on the VCR turn to 4:30, she says, "Not any more." She then crawls over to the phone and dials ...

If problems do occur with the sharing rule, they are usually related to longer programs which one child is particularly interested in. Then the child who is watching may protest when the other child decides to exercise his or her right and change the channel. It is at this point the rule may break down. According to Rich and Mary:

> Rich: The kids are on the half hour thing . ... They run into trouble when they watch an hour show. (He laughs.) I don't know what they do!
>
> Mary: They fight...
>
> Rich: I say there's another TV, go watch the other one. That can be a drag on Sunday morning when we're trying to sleep in and you can hear them down in the basement fighting and one of them stomps up here and cranks up the upstairs set. Oh ...
>
> Researcher: *So who usually wins the fights?*
>
> Rich: Between the two of them? Jeez, that's probably a draw.
>
> Mary: I think Kate would tell you Jesse wins all the time to make you feel pity.
>
> Jesse: He'll win it through bruteness but then she'll win it through....
>
> Mary: Squealness — whining.
>
> Rich: Ya, squealness — she squeals so loud that, ah, you'd do anything to not hear her squeal.

While there are explicit rules that regulate how Rich and the children control the television, there does not appear to be any such rule limiting Mary's control of the television. I believe this reflects the fact that she is often not a part of the power relationships centered around the color television, because she is often working and thus separated from ongoing negotiations.

However, all family members are part of other, mostly implicit rules concerning television and the enforcement of equality. These other rules are: 1. Channel searching with the remote should be kept to a minimum because it can be annoying for others viewing the television; 2. The seating pattern at the dining room table is not fixed, meaning the best spots for viewing the living room television are open to all family members from meal to meal; 3. In a conflict over viewing between parents and children, the parents often defer to the children; 4. In a conflict over viewing between adults, the adults negotiate and compromise in most situations.

The channel searching rule appears to be the only explicit rule of these four. According to my observations, it negatively affects Rich and Katie the most — they both tend to channel search for lengthier periods than Mary and Jesse, whose channel searching appears to be more centered around finding a program rather than simply watching the channels change. I observed Mary admonish Rich for prolonged channel searching on several occasions by pointedly reminding him of the rule or simply expressing her dislike for channel searching. Jesse on several occasions was quick to point out the rule to Katie in response to her channel searching. According to the rule, prolonged channel searching is seen as a rather selfish activity; therefore, it does not fit in with the egalitarian ideal underlying the family.

Because the living room television is usually on during meals and family members usually pay at least some attention to the set while eating, the lack of a fixed seating pattern indicates another rule of equality in television viewing. Some spots at the table are better than others for viewing, and I was never able to discern any sort of fixed pattern — members would usually shift positions at the table with each meal. There appears to be no "head" of the table. During two meals when Mary was gone, I did observe Rich take the worst position for television viewing and the children the best positions. Rich was reading a book at the table both of these times and, it appears, deliberately chose the poor spot in deference to the children, who were watching the television.

This leads us to the third of these four rules — how the parents often defer to the children in situations involving viewing conflicts. Technology aids the family here — the parents will often let the children watch, but will use the VCR to record the programs they are interested in. The adults then watch the recorded programs later, after the children are in bed. In addition, the adults will often watch the black and white set and allow the children to watch the color set in a conflict over viewing. According to Mary, "There are so many dingy things I have to yell at them about that I'm not going to fight with them over a TV." Thus, the rule keeps in check potential "abuses" of parental authority and thus enforces the egalitarian ideal in the family.

Rich and Mary appear to follow an unwritten rule which simply stresses that conflicts between them over television programming are usually not worthwhile.[10] Maintaining the peace and being together while viewing usually overrides one of them watching a particular program. The two usually try to negotiate and compromise in subtle ways if they have separate viewing preferences. For example, each prefers a different local news program at 6 or 10 p.m. But they compromise by watching "whatever's on." Therefore, it appears that equality is enforced through the avoidence of conflict in many viewing situations.

Television and Nullifying the Enforcement of Equality

Despite well-meant rules of behavior, utopia is, of course, often more of a concept than a reality — in the Wilson home as in the rest of the world. In short, actual power struggles often transcend ideal, egalitarian power structures. Thus, most of the rules of egalitarian television use in the Wilson home are nullifed in certain situations. The spurning of the rules of individuality and equality reflect power struggles which are not directly related to television; nevertheless, the television often becomes a part of power struggles since it is pervasive in the home. As stated earlier in the paper, in power struggles, the television becomes a tool of leverage — a way to influence change in the family power structure or at least reflect the actual power structure underlying the ideal egalitarian structure. In the actual power structure, the adults — the parents — are in ultimate control. Concerning the children, Jesse, who is oldest as well as male, holds more power than Katie, who is younger and female.

One way the egalitarian ideal is compromised is through Mary's commandeering of the black and white television when she sews. When Mary is involved in a big sewing project and must spends hours each day for up to several weeks down in her sewing room working, she has Rich move the black and white set from the living room to her sewing room. Rich even installed a splitter unit on the family room cable wire and ran a cable wire into the sewing room for when Mary uses the black and white set in there. Rich said that when Mary is busy sewing, he will carry the black and white set "up and down the stair probably twice a week at least."

Apparently the rationale for Mary's commandeering of the black and white set is that she is involved in work-oriented activity rather than leisure activity — she uses the television as a device to relieve the tediousness of long hours behind a sewing machine. Because she is donating her time and energy for wages which will help the family, she feels she has the right to pull the black and white television out of its normal setting, place it in another setting where other members cannot easily view it, and solely control it. This affects the egalitarian ideal because it removes for lengthy periods one of the means for allowing fairness in television use and control. If the black and white set is not in the living room, there is no second set for a family member to turn to in a conflict over programming, and family members are also unable to watch television while eating at the dining room table. Despite this nullification of equality, all family members appear to accept this commandeering of the second set for lengthy periods. It appears that money is power in this situation — because Mary is providing income through sewing, she is able to shift power into her favor and gain control of the black and white television. When Mary is finished sewing or involved in part of a project which does not necessitiate long hours behind the sewing machine, the television is returned to its living room space, where all members have access to it.

---

[10] The exception to this is Rich's viewing of sports and other favorite programs of each.

Another way television equality is partially nullified is when one of the adults tightly regulates the viewing environment — usually by issuing curt imperatives such as "shhhht!" These imperatives are directed to the children, who through this are kept from talking to each other or the adults, fighting with one another, or generally engaging in any activity which could disrupt the peaceful viewing of the adults. I never observed the children issue imperatives of this nature to the adults — and rarely to one another. Thus, it is the adults who suspend a sense of equality with the children in order to keep the environment quiet. Both Mary and Rich said in the interview that parental control of the viewing environment was part of their childhood. Mary, for example, told of how her father, when the entire family was watching television, "would sit there and go 'shhhht! shhhht!' to the "kids sitting around."

While I observed both parents engage in this regulatory activity, Rich was by far more engaged in the policing of the viewing environment that Mary. But it must be noted I observed Rich viewing television with the kids much more than I did Mary viewing with the children — Mary was often working. Rich issued the most imperatives during his favorite prime time show — 'Dallas'. I observed Rich and the children watch 'Dallas' twice — each time Rich issued a curt imperative — usually a 'shhhht!' — about once every seven minutes. Because of this, the viewing environment was radically altered in favor of Rich. The children were forced to adjust their behaviors or leave the environment, a choice Rich offered to each several times. Here are some typical 'Dallas' imperatives and reactions:

> ... Rich says to Katie, who is spinning the stool legs as she watches, "You want to go upstairs and spin that or sit here and watch TV?" Katie stops and says she will "sit still" ...
>
> ... During a climactic scene, JR finds out he has another son. Rich laughs loudly at this. After a second, both children join in the laughter. Then Rich cuts off their laughter with a "shhhht!" ....
>
> ... Jesse mimicks one of the actors — he gets halfway through a sentence and Rich cuts him off with a "shhhht!" During a comical scene in JR's office, Both Jesse and Rich laugh. Katie, however, just sits there — it appears she doesn't understand what has happened. She asks Rich about the scene by saying, "Why doesn't he get the bigger office?" Rich cuts her off with a "shhhht!" because a new scene is opening. ...

In addition to regulatory imperatives, the egalitarian ideal was often suspended by Rich through his commandeering of the easy chair and ottoman directly in front of the family room television. Several times, (and always when 'Dallas' was coming on), I observed Rich order the child sitting in the easy chair to move to the couch. Only once did I observe Rich take the couch and allow a child to remain in the easy chair during family room viewing. Control of the chair lies with Rich first and Jesse second, it appears — Mary and Katie usually sit on the couch. Apparently, the easy chair has by its location become a sort of power symbol — a symbol which is at odds with the egalitarian ideal.

Another, perhaps more subtle, way the egalitarian ideal is nullifed is through the use of information about program scheduling. Rich learned long ago that information was power when it came to television viewing. During the interview, Rich told how as a child he would memorize the program schedule printed in the newspaper to help him gain control of the television. His father did not know the schedule well, but would control the television if he saw that a program he enjoyed was on. Rich, because he knew the schedule, would make sure the shows he was interested in were tuned in — not those his father was interested in. Thus, Rich would often maintain control of the set.

Rich is still an avid reader of the newspaper program schedule. On numerous occasions I observed Rich reading the weekly TV guide from the Sunday newspaper. He would not simply glance through it, but study it for minutes at a time. Because of this, he is considered, at least by Mary — his equal in family power — to know what is offered. She often uses Rich as her TV guide, not the newspaper. I only observed Mary referring to the guide once, but I often heard her ask Rich "what was on tonight" or something similar. Thus, it is likely Rich subtly controls certain program choices by simply knowing the schedule better than Mary — just as he did with his father years ago. Jesse has picked up on this idea of information as power and is following in his father's footsteps. He too reads the schedule often, and even claims he "studies it" more than Rich does. Thus, knowing program scheduling can give one a distinct edge when it comes to power struggles and control of programming.

It appears that lengthy channel searching is sometimes used to make a statement about power relations. Rich, who often expresses frustration over the limited time he is able to watch sports, sometimes appears to deliberately engage in prolonged channel searches simply to annoy Mary. On two different occasions I observed Rich begin prolonged channel searching after Mary expressed her displeasure over his turning the channel to a sporting event. After so much channel searching by Rich, Mary would then express her displeasure over his channel searching. Rich would not stop, but continue to channel search for another minute or two. He appeared to me making a rebellious statement — since he was frustrated with having to abide by one television rule, he would break another and make Mary just as frustrated as he was. Katie engaged in similar activity several times as well — she apparently intended to annoy Jesse, and usually succeeded. On several occasions, Jesse expressed his frustration with Katie's prolonged channel searching during her half hour of control of the color television.

Related to this form of the nullification of the rules of equality is another form — physical control of the remote. It is through the remote that channel searching is acomplished. While control of the remote does not appear to be a problem among the adults, it is a potent area of contention among the children. Jesse does his best to keep the remote from his sister and tries to sabotage her use of the remote if she does manage to get it. Often I observed Jesse holding the remote, even when it was Katie's turn to control the television. Because he is bigger and older than she is, there is little she can do to get the remote. If he did not continue to physically hold it, he would sometimes hide it — usually under the easy chair. Katie would usually have to get up, go over and stand by the entertainment center, and change channels by using the buttons on the VCR. The children explain it all best:

> Researcher: *Which one of you get's the remote most?*
>
> Katie: (points at Jesse)
>
> Jesse: Me.
>
> Researcher: *I thought you were suppose to each have half an hour?*
>
> Katie: Ya except I ...
>
> Jesse: (interrupts) I control the remote. She's got to go up there and block the place where the remote comes in .... Sometimes I just gotta keep something in front of there. (He laughs.) And then I gotta knock that down when it's my turn.
>
> Researcher: *Why do you let him do that?*
>
> Katie: Because it's his turn.
>
> Jesse: No, it's not my turn —I just keep the remote and I say, 'Well, go up and do it yourself" and when she goes to a show I don't like I change it and then she puts something in front of there and uses the buttons up there. She thinks it's a jip. (He laughs.)
>
> Katie: And pretty soon I'm gonna tell mommy and you're gonna be in big trouble!
>
> Jesse: OK, next question?

Jesse obviously sees the remote as a symbol of power and uses it to undermine the half hour rule and emphasize to Katie that despite what their parents do and say, he has more power than she does. Mary and Rich are apparently not aware of Jesse's power plays with the remote. During the interview, Mary said that the children "use (the remote) equally" and "hand it back and forth." Rich concurred with this. This, of course, is the ideal, rule-enforced power relationship between the two children, but, in fact, it is not the day-to-day actual power relationship I observed. In addition to the remote power play, both children agreed during the interview that Jesse usually keeps Katie from using the Nintendo. Katie claims she does not want to play it, but that could be because Jesse won't let her play it. I never observed Katie play the Nintendo.

Katie, however, is not helpless when it comes to day-to-day power plays between the two children. As mentioned earlier, if she can gain control of the remote and is able to use it, she attempts to annoy Jesse through prolonged channel searching. Another way she apparently deliberately annoys Jesse is by watching programs during her half hour slot which she knows he will dislike extremely. She watches shows which feature woodworking, home shopping displays, half-hour product solicitations, and so on — she often appears to deliberately avoid the standard cartoon after-school fare. In short, she uses the half hour rule to make her power statements to her more powerful brother.

Television and the Socialization of Children into Adult Roles

Part of the child-rearing process is teaching children how to be competent adults. It is possible children are socialized into some adult activites and roles through programs — through television portrayals of the world. Such learning has been called "incidential" or "unintentional" learning in mass media research.[11] To me, even more likely than incidental learning through actual television portrayals is incidental learning through the family contexts that television programs are viewed in. Many adult roles are played out in front of the television in home environments where there is a heavy amount of daily television viewing. The Wilsons live in such an environment. I argue that the types of negotiations over television use and control which I have discussed earlier in this paper as well as other behaviors I will soon discuss all play an important part in the transmission of definitions and norms of culture from one generation to another generation.

I was able to discern several areas where it appears the Wilson children are developing adult notions and behaviors apparently through repeatedly observing their parents' negotiations over and uses of the television. One such area is how certain tele-vision*viewing habits* are apparently being transmitted from adult to child. Katie in particular appears to be developing a viewing habit quite similar to her mother's. She, like Mary, rarely sits for lengthy periods and does nothing but watch television. If she is watching, she must keep busy — she often digs out knitting or sewing projects and works on them while viewing the TV, similar to how her mother works on major professional sewing projects while watching television. If she has no project, she keeps her hands and/or feet busy by nervously manipulating objects like a jewelry box, a VCR tape, the stools near the entertainment center, etc. Mary, when not involved in a project, will not nervously manipulate objects, but she does smoke cigarettes rather frequently. Thus, in part because of her natural disposition, but also because of seeing how her mother uses the television, it appears that Katie is developing her own version of the way adult females should watch TV. Jesse, on the other hand, generally appears to be developing the viewing habits of his father. Like Rich, Jesse enjoys sitting quietly for lengthy periods, watching a predetermined schedule of programs. Jesse also likes to sit in the easy chair in the family room, just as his father does. Again, the child's natural disposition probably has a great deal to do with his viewing habits, but it is likely his observations of how his father watches television have also had an impact on him. Thus, gender as well as recognizing adult roles becomes a factor here. It appears that the Wilson children see how adult *men* watch TV and how adult *women* watch TV and are learning to behave accordingly.

Jesse, it seems, especially sees use and control of the television as an important part of the path to adulthood. It became obvious to me through repeated observations that Jesse is very proud of his ability to understand and use the program schedule, manipulate television-related technology, and interpret and converse about television programs as an adult would. Jesse often subtly brags about these abilites — and he often compares his adult-like competence with his sister's apparent lack of abilities in these areas. Katie appears to be much less interested in developing adult competences in television use and control, but she is beginning, it seems, to show some concern in these areas.

Based on his father's viewing patterns in particular, Jesse appears to be learning that knowing program scheduling information means power in the family context. On a more general level, Jesse appears to be learning that adults *plan viewing experiences*. He apparently has mastered this information-oriented facet of television viewing and is very proud of himself for doing so. On several occasions he bragged about these abilites and rebuked Katie for not knowing how to use the program schedule. Thus, it appears he sees his ability to use the guide as a sign of maturity. Two of many examples of this are as follows:

---

[11] Melvin DeFleur and Everette Dennis, *Understanding Mass Communication* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), pp. 316-318.

> I ask Jesse how he found the cartoon he is watching now. He says he saw it "in the TV guide." He says that he "usually looks in the TV guide every morning or after school." He says, "Katie doesn't know how to use the guide, so she has to go through the channels three times before she finds something to watch," but he knows exactly where the shows he wants to watch are and when they are on ...
>
> ... Jesse comes into the living room and asks Rich, "You're gonna watch 'Roseanne' tonight?" Rich says he is. Jesse, walking toward the kitchen, nonchalantly says, "8 p.m., channel 5." He seems proud that he can recite this from memory. Jesse then follows Rich down to the family room. He says after Rich turns the TV to 'Roseanne', "See? 'Roseanne' is coming on — I know the guide like the back of my hand!"

Katie on only one occasion expressed an interest in learning how to use the program schedule — and she went to her father for guidance in this area. During one evening when the entire family was watching together in the family room, Katie got off the couch and went over to Rich in the easy chair and asked him how the guide worked. Rich spent about five minutes explaining the conversion grid to her — he showed her how to determine which programs are offered in their area. Katie acted interested while Rich talked, but she did not after that use the guide or show any more interest in it, at least not during my observation periods.

Jesse is also very proud of his ability to manipulate television-related technology. He talks of his abilites and Katie's lack of abilities in this area much as he talks of using the program schedule. Jesse on several occasions claimed that he has learned how to use the remote, VCR and Nintendo effectively, but Katie has not. Again, it appears that Jesse is attaching views of his maturity to television use and control — his understanding appears to be that *adults can manipulate technology effectively*. An example of the way the children — Jesse in particular — talk of television technology is as follows:

> Researcher: *(to Katie) So you don't get to use the remote very much then?*
>
> Katie: Nope, unless ....
>
> Jesse: When she uses it the batteries get pretty much dead and the bottom's already loose — she really doesn't know how to use it.
>
> Katie: Yes I do!
>
> Jesse: See, I got a special way (shows how he holds the remote so the bottom doesn't fall off)
>
> Researcher: *(to Jesse) So you don't think she uses it right?*
>
> Katie: I do too!
>
> Jesse: Baloney.
>
> Researcher: *What does she do wrong?*
>
> Jesse: Um, she doesn't know enough patience — she grabs the remote and goes ... (He mimicks channel flipping — he's holding the remote while he says this.)
>
> Katie: No I don't.
>
> Jesse: Ya, it is — you go chuch chuch chuch chuch. (He mimicks with remote again.) And then you lose all your patience and give up.

In addition, it appears manipulating technology — especially Nintendo video games — is seen by Jesse to be something males in particular are supposed to do well. Thus, gender appears to be a factor here. From the way Jesse talks, he seems to see Nintendo playing as a distinctly male activity. For example, Jesse says he and his male friends often talk about Nintendo at school and compare playing abilities by discussing who reached what level in a particular game. Jesse claimed during the interview that Katie did not know how to operate the Nintendo and that "last time she played it she alsmost broke it." Katie denies this — she says she does know how the use the machine, but she just doesn't want to play Nintendo and so does not use it. Perhaps she too sees it as male activity.

Both children appear to value programs with adult themes and will often watch them with their parents. Part of the reason for this is probably because watching TV is one way to spend some time with their parents. Another reason, I think, is because watching these adult-oriented programs makes them feel more "adult" — even if they don't like the shows or understand them. Often it appears that the children are not particularly enjoying the adult shows, but they watch them regardless. For example, both children watch 'Dallas' with Rich every Friday night. Jesse admitted in the interview he is not very fond of the show. And each time I observed Rich and the children watching the show, both Jesse and Katie rarely appeared to be enjoying the show much. Jesse would finger objects on the couch and look at them closely or read his Nintendo magazine while the show was on — Katie would play with objects on the couch or fireplace, chew on her clothing, and would often have a rather blank look on her face.

I suspect that Katie does not follow much of what happens in these adult shows. Often she asks for someone to explain what just happened in a particular scene, and many times the humor in a scene escapes her — while the others laugh, Katie sits on the couch looking puzzled. When Katie does comment on an aspect of a show, the comment is usually surface-oriented — attributional rather than inferential in nature.[12] For example, while viewing 'Dallas' she rarely appears to understand how the plot and subplots are unfolding through the stringing together of certain key scenes. Rich and Jesse comment on plot; Katie either asks questions about plot, or comments on how something looks. Typical comments are:

> ... Katie says during one scene,"His hair looks green!" Rich then comments on the plot with, "She's snooping through Cliff's stuff — what is she looking for?" Katie then says, "She's got powder on her face."
>
> ... In the scene, JR says he will dump more oil to save his tanker. Katie asks, "Dump more oil what?" Rich impatiently replies, "Dump more oil in the gulf of Mexico." Katie looks perplexed.

Despite these apparent interpretive deficiences, Katie usually watches the more adult-oriented shows like 'Dallas' and 'Married with Children' with the rest of the family. While her interpretive skills related to these shows are as yet not well developed, it is likely they will be before too much longer — she is in the process of *learning how adults think and talk about television* through watching certain shows with her parents and brother.

Jesse recognizes Katie's deficiences as well as his own prowess in interpretation of and conversation about adult-oriented television shows. As with reading the schedule and manipulating technology, Jesse apparently sees these interpretive and conversational abilities as signs of his growing adulthood and is often quick to point them out and contrast them with Katie's less sophisticated abilities. Again, examples from watching 'Dallas' are helpful here:

> A scene comes on showing an oil pumping platform on the ocean. Jesse says, "Hey Katie, you know why pumps are on the ocean?" Katie says, "Ya, cause there's oil in the water." Jesse says, "There's no oil in the water! Jeez!" (He sounds extremely disgusted.) Rich then briefly describes to Katie how oil is formed and where it is found. ...
>
> ... In the show, Bobby Ewing talks to his young son subtly and briefly about sex. Jesse says to Katie, "I know what they are talking about." Katie says, "What?" Jesse says, "The birds and the bees." Katie asks, "What are the birds and the bees?" Rich then curtly says, "Katie — you'll learn later." They all are then quiet. A little later there is a transitional scene depicting an outside shot of an apartment complex. Rich says, "Is this April's place?" Jesse says, "I bet she's doing something about the birds and the bees!" Jesse then sits back on the couch, crosses his legs, and says, "I already know something about the birds and the bees."

---

[12] See Larry Messaris and Paul Gross, "Interpretations of a Photographic Narrative in Four Age Groups," in *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* (1977), p. 99.

Jesse and Rich often converse about the plot while watching 'Dallas'. They both appear to enjoy this — I believe both understand on a semi-subconscious level that engaging in these sorts of speculative discussions concerning plot is a form of adult-to-adult discourse. Both recognize it as a sign of Jesse's maturation.

Jesse often displays his interpretive and conversational skills in other situations as well. For example, Jesse especially enjoys the controversial program, 'Married with Children'. Many have criticized the show as sexist and overly sexual in visuals and dialogue. I think Jesse realizes that the show is quite "racy" and this is one reason it is one of his favorites. It is truly an "adult" show, but his parents allow him to watch it anyway — and he *understands* the humor presented in it. In addition to all this, Jesse is in the habit of not only commenting on characters and plot during programs, but recounting scenes and dialogue in shows to the rest of the family only minutes after they took place on television. For example, Jesse said soon after an episode of 'Married with Children' ended, "Wasn't that part when Al Bundy brought the shoes in the door funny?" From this comment he launched into an elaborate description of the scene and plot. He continued until Mary reminded him that everyone else saw the scene too. He appears to be simply displaying his interpretive skills at such times.

Conclusion

No one would dispute that television is an important component of many if not most American families today. Yet, there has been very little research which explores how the television really fits into the family life of Americans. Most research has been based on the transmission model where viewing television is seen as a personal process — a one-to-one arrangement between viewer and the electronic box. I have used Carey's ritual view of communication and ethnographic methods in an attempt to step beyond the transmission model — to see television as a rather integral part of a larger spectrum of negotiated meanings within a family. Television is not simply an electronic box which transmits homogenized messages to a passive individual. Television is a part of a family's day-to-day construction of meanings. I focused on two areas of meanings — power relationships and the maturation process of children — within one particular family. I certainly did not exhaust all possible avenues of analysis in this study. I could go back to my data and reanalyze for how television fits in with other aspects of family life, such as how the television channels or mediates interpersonal interaction.

An ethnographic study of one family is a very small beginning. Everything presented in this paper must be understood to be one person's interpretation of one family's use of television. It, of course, is very possible that television links with very different social processes within different families. In order to build theory to a generalizable level, I think a rather extensive comparative study would need to be organized — perhaps similar to David Morely's recent study, *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*, but based on participant observation as well as inteviewing. Such a comparative study would require several researchers and many, many hours of field work.

I believe a comparative study would need to be conducted on two levels. The first level would be a comparision of families similar in class position, ethnic background and other independent variables. Because the white middle class is predominant in the United States, I would first study and compare a number of white, middle-class families. One could begin to generalize in such a comparison. The next level would involve the introduction of new variables in the family unit for the sake of comparison with the base group. New variables could be upper class families, lower class families, or black middle class families — there are numerous possibilities. One could perhaps take generalization a step further in this second level of analysis and comparison. An extensive comparative study could perhaps offer explanations for what this paper has only begun to explore — what television really means to American families.

References

Carey, James W. "A Cultural Approach to Communication," *Communication* 2 (1975).

DeFleur, Melvin and Dennis, Everette. *Understanding Mass Communication*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985.

Fine, Gary. *With the Boys: Little League Baseball and Preadolescent Culture*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Glaser, Barney and Strauss, Anselm. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitiative Research*. New York: Aldine Publishing Company, 1967.

Goodman, Irene F. "Television's Role in Family Interaction." *Journal of Broadcasting* 4: 2 (June 1983).

Lull, James. "How Families Select TV Programmes: A Mass Observational Study." *Journal of Broadcasting* 26: 4 (Fall 1982).

Lull, James. "The Social Uses of Television." *Human Communication Research* 6: 3 (Spring 1980).

Messaris, Larry and Gross, Paul. "Interpretations of a Photographic Narrative in Four Age Groups." *Studies in the Anthropology of Visual Communication* (1977).

Morley, David. *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure*. New York: Routledge, 1986.

Morley, David. *The Nationwide Audience*. British Film Institute, 1980.

Stoneman, Zolinda and Gene H. Brody, "Family Interactions during Three Programs." *Journal of Broadcasting* 4: 2 (June 1983).

Wilson, Stan Le Roy. *Mass Media, Mass Culture*. New York: Random House, 1989.

WOMEN'S CORRESPONDENTS' VISIBILITY ON THE NETWORK EVENING NEWS

Joe S. Foote
Chair and Professor
Department of Radio-Television
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois 62901
(618) 536-7555

Paper presented to the Radio-TV Journalism Division, Commission on the Status of Women, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Boston, MA, August 7-10, 1991.

WOMEN CORRESPONDENTS' VISIBILITY ON THE NETWORK EVENING NEWS

Since the Federal Communications Commission adopted rules in the late sixties to encourage broadcasters to hire women and minorities, the role of women in television news has become an issue, especially at the networks which have symbolized the pinnacle of the broadcasting profession (Memorandum Opinion and Order, 1968). Pioneers like Pauline Frederick, Nancy Dickerson, Lisa Howard, Marlene Sanders, Marya McLaughlin, Liz Trotta, and Barbara Walters established themselves during the fifties and sixties in network news, but it was not until the seventies that women made significant entry into the profession (Hosley & Yamada, 1987). Flander (1985) describes three distinct waves of women entering television news: (1) the small group of pre-FCC women listed above; (2) correspondents like Connie Chung, Lesley Stahl, Carole Simpson, Catherine Mackin, Jane Pauley, Sylvia Chase, and Jessica Savitch who were hired during the sixties and early seventies just as emphasis was being placed on recruitment of women; and (3) a third wave of correspondents hired in the late seventies and early eighties who had come to expect expanded opportunities in television news and whose role models were women in the first wave of correspondents. This group included correspondents like Diane Sawyer, Lynn Sherr, Martha Teichner, Andrea Mitchell, Judy Woodruff, Ann Compton, Ann Garrels and a larger group of lesser known names.

The opportunities for women during the seventies began to register on employment surveys. Hosley and Yamada (1987) cited a 1976 study showing that the number of television newsrooms employing women grew between 50% and 80% between 1972 and 1976. Stone's 1987 survey (1988) of news directors showed that the percentage of women working in television news rose from 20% to 32% between 1976 and 1986, but in his 1990 survey the women's share of the work force 1989 was the same as 1988--33% of all news staff in television (Stone, 1990).

Accompanying the expanded opportunities for women were growing frustrations in the workplace, especially in network television news. Fung (1988), in a survey of 452 network journalists, found that men were paid salaries from 15% to 81% higher for comparable work. Fung also found a shorter professional lifespan for female correspondents: nearly two-thirds of male correspondents were between the ages of 40 and 50 while nearly two-thirds of the female correspondents were between 30 and 40.

While women were increasingly being hired as correspondents, their overall visibility on the evening news--the flagship broadcast--appeared to be low. Marlene Sanders, one of the first women network correspondents and the first woman network news vice president, believed that women correspondents found themselves increasingly relegated to the second string:

> Air time is the broadcast equivalent of column space at a newspaper. If you are on the evening news regularly, the anchorman or executive producer is in your corner and you've made page one. If you are

> relegated to the early morning or weekends, fringe broadcasts or radio, then you are on the back pages. The favored correspondents, part of the so-called "A-team," get the major beats, while the workhorse correspondents, part of the "B-team," get the rest (Sanders & Rock, 1988).

More and more women correspondents became concerned that their visibility was far lower than it should be and that their paths to advancement were blocked. In 1985, a group of women correspondents at ABC used a luncheon honoring Barbara Walters to protest to News President Roone Arledge their lack of airtime on the evening news. Subsequently, The National Organization for Women branded ABC as the "most sexist" of the three major networks (Alter & Weathers, 1985).

During the eighties, research began to support the women correspondents' claims of second-class status. Foote ("Too many", 1985) found that during 1983 and 84 the majority of women correspondents were clustered in a "women's ghetto" where they comprised 30% of the bottom 30 correspondents but only 10% of the top thirty. In 1986, The National Organization for Women in a two month study of network news broadcasts found that women reported only 10.5 percent of the stories on the three network evening news shows (Sanders & Rock, 1988). Ziegler and White (1990), in a three week sample of network evening newscasts, found that only 12% of the stories were reported by female correspondents. Sanders and Rock's (1985) survey of network news content in November, 1986, showed that women reported only 13% of news stories. A study by DWJ Associates in 1987 (Zacks, 1988) found that no women were among the top ten in terms of total airtime.

This study, a census of all correspondent reports aired on network news from 1983 through 1989, provides the first comprehensive, longitudinal picture of women correspondents' visibility on the evening news. The research questions are as follow:

1. What differences exist in the exposure patterns of men and women correspondents on the network evening news?

2. Are their differences between the networks in the visibility of women?

3. How did women correspondents' exposure patterns change over the seven years of the study?

4. Does geographic assignment appear to influence the visibility of women on the evening news?

Method

The Vanderbilt Television News Index and Abstracts were used to compile the visibility of correspondents on the evening news from January 1983 to December 1989. The unit of analysis was the network news correspondent report. Names of correspondents were obtained from the television networks and from the index of correspondents found at the beginning of each monthly index. Coders used the Vanderbilt Index's listing of correspondents to calculate the monthly visibility of each individual. Full time anchors, correspondents serving as anchors, and network commentators were not included in the study.

Correspondent visibility totals were grouped by month, quarter and year. The sex of the correspondent, assignment, and the network for which he/she worked were also recorded. When a correspondent changed networks or assignment over the course of the study, the most recent assignment and place of employment were recorded.

Because none of the coding involved subjective decisions, only one coder worked on a particular phase of the study. At several intervals over the seven year study, a separate coder randomly double-checked the original coders' accuracy. The figures for the top one hundred correspondents were double-checked for accuracy for all seven years.

The study produced a total of 509 persons who had appeared at least once on the evening newscasts of one of the three television networks over the seven year period. In order to eliminate affiliate station reporters, temporary reporters, correspondents assigned to the evening news, consultants, and others who were not considered full time network correspondents, a threshold of five reports per year was set for inclusion in the study. This procedure eliminated 223 correspondents, 44% of those who appeared at least once on network news during the seven years. A total of 108 women appeared on the evening news during the seven year period.

Setting the visibility threshold at five reports per year risked excluding full time correspondents with very low visibility. Yet, it would be difficult to imagine the networks retaining full time personnel in these difficult budgeting times who contribute so little to the news product. The five report cut off was a reasonable way to exclude those who appeared occasionally on the evening news but were not full time correspondents assigned primarily to that program.

Results

Over the seven year period, 83.6% of the 275 correspondents were men and 16.4% were women. The figures for women for individual years were somewhat higher but remarkably consistent, providing a static environment for women correspondents (1983-16.7%; 1984-16.7%; 1985-16.7%; 1986-16%; 1987-16.3%; 1988-15.3%; 1989-17.1%). Overall, there were 27% women and 14% men in the lowest exposure category but 15% women and 29% men in the highest exposure category.

Table 1 compares the exposure of men and women correspondents during each of the seven years of the study. In every year, women registered highly only in the lowest exposure category while men clearly dominated the highest exposure category. Women made no significant gains in exposure as the years progressed but the percentage of women in the highest exposure category did increase during 1988, a presidential election year in which several women correspondents received high profile campaign assignments. The male/female percentages remained relatively constant overall even after the networks reduced their correspondent forces during the mid-eighties.

TABLE 1 HERE

As Table 2 shows, only one woman, Lesley Stahl, was among the ten most visible correspondents over seven years. Only four women were listed in the top fifty from 1983 through 1989, all of them based in Washington. In each individual year (Table 3), there was no more than one woman among the top ten until 1989 when there were three: Lesley Stahl (CBS), Andrea Mitchell (NBC), and Rita Braver (CBS). While 6 women appeared in the top fifty in 1989, there were only 8 in the top 100, nearly a 50% decrease from 1988. The bulk of the correspondents remained at the lower end of the spectrum. At ABC in 1989, there was no woman in the top 50; Sheilah Kast (65th) and Bettina Gregory (96th) were the two highest for the network.

TABLES 2 AND 3 HERE

Assignment location influenced visibility for both male and female correspondents. Eight of the top ten women and nine of the top ten men over the seven year period were assigned to Washington. The White House provided an automatic entree to the evening news regardless of sex; a White House assignment gave Lesley Stahl an opportunity to become the most visible female correspondent.

Discussion

After making significant gains during the seventies, most women correspondents reporting on the network evening news in the eighties were locked into a static underclass, going neither up nor down. Some correspondents gained high visibility each year, but usually these were substitutions not expansions.

Although three women were included among the ten most visible correspondents in 1989, most were appearing on the evening news less than once a month. While women correspondents were likely to gain higher exposure on other network programs, status is conferred within the organization and worth measured by the ability to gain access to the flagship evening newscast. Most women correspondents do not have the quality, permanent assignments that guarantee regular visibility. If a "B" team of less favored correspondents who receive marginal assignments and little airtime does indeed exist in network news, women are clearly overrepresented.

Major personnel cutbacks in news after management and ownership changes at all three networks in 1985 and 1986 did not hurt women more than men. As networks rely more on network affiliates and foreign news providers however, women, who are disproportionately represented among the low visibility, "unproductive" correspondents, could be significantly affected by economic restructuring.

Because of employee reductions, all correspondents find a logjam impeding their upward mobility. Younger women must feel especially insecure because of their lack of seniority and because of the male-dominated management of the networks. There is a danger that many of the most intelligent and talented correspondents will become discouraged and leave network news before getting any opportunity to prove themselves.

While those with the lowest seniority appear most vulnerable, the highest seniority women, more so than their male counterparts, are also at risk. Today's veteran women correspondents worry about aging in an insecure environment where a woman's appearance might mean the difference between getting an assignment or even keeping their job.

With network women correspondents feeling insecure at both ends of the spectrum, they feel pressure to perform and excel within a finite period of time in the middle of their careers. It is too early to ascertain whether the aging of women correspondents is as serious a problem as it appears. Certainly first wave women like Marlene Sanders and Marya McLaughlin have found the networks no longer interested in their services. The real test will come when the second larger wave of women move past their fifties. The inclusion of age as a variable in future studies of this type would help in following this trend.

A significant factor in women gaining higher visibility on the evening news during the nineties will be the quality of assignments they can draw. The best year for women in this study was 1988 when a record number of women were assigned to cover the presidential election campaign. When the campaign assignment ended, however, several of these correspondents, with no permanent, top tier assignment to which they could return, drifted back to lower visibility positions.

The highest visibility for women is not in the correspondent corps but among anchors and hosts of primetime and morning programs. Many promising women correspondents have left evening news duty to assume more prestigious anchor positions. While male anchors usually are chosen from the upper ranks of the correspondent corps, most female anchors (e.g. Jane Pauley, Maria Shriver, Barbara Walters, Deborah Norville) ascend after serving relatively short periods as correspondents; among current anchors, only Connie Chung and Carole Simpson have been veteran network correspondents. This leapfrogging by promising correspondents can put the remaining passed over female correspondents in an inherently weaker position to compete for prize assignments. CBS's selection of Susan Spencer as White House correspondent in 1991, however, showed that opportunity still exists for veteran women correspondents.

This study's picture of limited access and of retarded upward mobility for women correspondents does not necessarily reflect industrywide trends at the entry level. With more women than men graduating from mass communications programs, the prospect of a "pink ghetto" effect with lower pay scales and lower professional status may pose a larger problem in the long run to women journalists than the visibility inequalities described in this paper.

Because of changing demographic trends in the workplace, it is important to have a census of correspondents' visibility to provide a definitive, dynamic portrait of women's progress or lack of progress over time. Further longitudinal research should document women's exposure on other network news programs and on other networks, such as CNN, as well as local television news. Employment trends for those behind the camera in producer, bureau chief, and executive positions should especially be examined. There is also a need to evaluate the quality of exposure as well as the quantity to determine if women are given assignments and stories comparable to men.

TABLE 1
YEARLY CORRESPONDENT VISIBILITY BY SEX
1983-89

	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988		1989	
No. of Exposures	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
5-15	21 12%	15 42%	35 18%	15 39%	43 22%	13 33%	43 23%	15 42%	31 19%	08 25%	29 19%	07 25%	26 17%	12 38%
16-24	35 20%	09 25%	41 21%	08 20%	28 14%	09 23%	38 20%	07 19%	22 13%	10 31%	15 10%	04 14%	21 14%	08 25%
25-39	63 35%	06 17%	58 30%	13 33%	63 32%	13 33%	57 30%	07 19%	54 33%	08 25%	48 31%	06 21%	45 29%	05 16%
40+	60 33%	06 17%[1]	61 31%	03 08%[2]	61 31%	04 10%[3]	51 27%	07 19%	57 35%	06 19%[4]	63 41%	11 39%	63 41%	07 22%
Column Total	179 83%	36 17%	195 83%	39 17%	195 83%	39 17%	189 84%	36 16%	164 84%	32 16%	155 85%	28 15%	155 83%	32 17%

1. Chi-square=22.45396, df=3, significant at the .0005 level

2. Chi-square=13.15460, df=3, significant at the .005 level

3. Chi-square=8.47357, df=3, significant at the .05 level

4. Chi-square=12.12940, df=3, significant at the .05 level

TABLE 2

FIFTY MOST VISIBLE CORRESPONDENTS 1983-89

	CORRESPONDENT	NET.	SEX	83	84	85	86	87	88	89	TOTAL
1.	Donaldson, Sam	ABC	M	98	144	117	113	147	110	7	736
1.	Wallace, Chris	ABC	M	128	130	133	122	120	99	4	736
3.	McWethy, John	ABC	M	95	93	104	101	107	97	96	693
4.	Plante, Bill	CBS	M	86	83	79	110	155	111	61	685
5.	Hager, Robert	CBS	M	99	92	89	91	76	100	100	647
6.	Martin, David	CBS	M	92	77	81	101	95	96	105	647
7.	Hume, Brit	ABC	M	58	106	57	81	79	100	141	622
8.	Morton, Bruce	CBS	M	80	88	60	81	69	146	74	598
9.	Cochran, John	NBC	M	65	40	79	65	39	70	148	506
10.	Stahl, Leslie	CBS	F	78	62	71	57	44	70	120	502
11.	Braver, Rita	CBS	F	29	37	53	60	73	93	91	436
12.	Cordtz, Dan	ABC	M	95	162	74	68	36	0	0	435
13.	Brady, Ray	CBS	M	72	61	50	56	70	64	59	432
14.	Spencer, Susan	CBS	F	48	75	38	56	60	60	72	409
15.	Bazell, Robert	NBC	M	59	79	62	51	45	49	60	405
16.	Peterson , Barry	CBS	M	83	53	51	43	39	65	67	401
17.	Schieffer, Bob	CBS	M	65	41	14	44	56	107	68	395
18.	Fenton, Tom	CBS	M	44	67	63	59	41	59	58	391
19.	Jones, Phil	CBS	M	54	50	45	72	101	41	23	386
20.	Lewis, George	NBC	M	54	56	38	37	43	66	89	383
21.	Simon, Bob	CBS	M	49	55	50	27	51	79	67	378
22.	Mitchell, Andrea	NBC	F	32	37	34	42	50	68	115	378
23.	Zelnick, Bob	ABC	M	32	27	53	50	84	65	64	375
24.	Bowen, Jerry	CBS	M	67	56	48	42	49	45	64	371
25.	Dunsmore, Barrie	ABC	M	71	56	55	45	35	60	46	368
25.	Dancy, John	NBC	M	42	25	43	54	94	60	37	355
27.	Engberg, Eric	CBS	M	43	38	36	78	50	72	38	355
28.	Jensen, Mike	NBC	M	58	40	55	54	61	38	46	352
29.	O'Neil, Roger	NBC	M	75	52	44	28	38	51	64	352
30.	Francis, Fred	NBC	M	50	44	42	48	46	58	58	346
31.	Shepard, Gary	NBC	M	35	64	38	45	43	68	49	342
32.	Stern, Carl	NBC	M	53	42	42	37	64	43	55	336
33.	Dow, David	CBS	M	41	48	50	47	46	51	52	335

34.	Andrews, Wyatt	CBS	M	39	32	26	51	48	60	77	333
34.	Reynolds, Dean	ABC	M	0	20	42	56	49	114	52	333
36.	Murphy, Dennis	NBC	M	75	39	67	47	32	57	7	324
37.	Pizzey, Allen	CBS	M	37	41	50	75	53	21	41	318
38.	Potter, Ned	ABC	M	49	58	62	39	29	32	36	305
39.	Strait, George	ABC	M	40	51	51	38	41	44	39	304
40.	Fletcher, Martin	NBC	M	46	24	48	32	45	82	36	303
41.	Blackstone, John	CBS	M	34	32	55	36	49	38	57	301
41.	Currier, Frank	CBS	M	36	45	43	32	55	37	53	301
43.	Oliver, Don	NBC	M	53	36	33	37	35	50	55	299
44.	Myers, Lisa	NBC	F	7	73	23	30	26	85	49	293
44.	Roth, Richard	CBS	M	31	39	42	41	44	54	42	293
44.	Tunnel, Doug	CBS	M	24	40	48	49	53	37	42	293
47.	Levine, Irving R.	NBC	M	57	56	33	40	38	29	39	292
48.	Kur, Bob	NBC	M	40	47	30	40	37	61	34	289
48.	Rodgers, Walter	ABC	M	23	16	48	50	68	59	25	289
50.	Lee, Mike	ABC	M	29	36	49	42	54	38	34	282

TABLE 3

WOMEN CORRESPONDENTS VISIBILITY BY YEAR 83-89

RANK	1983		1984		1985		1986		1987		1988		1989		TOTAL	
0-10	0	0%	0	0%	1	3%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	3	9%	4	2%
11-50	4	11%	4	10%	3	8%	5	13%	4	12%	7	22%	3	9%	31	12%
51-100	5	13%	5	12%	6	16%	7	18%	8	24%	8	25%	2	6%	40	16%
101-150	7	19%	11	26%	12	32%	8	21%	10	29%	8	25%	13	38%	69	27%
150+*	21	57%	22	52%	15	41%	19	48%	12	35%	9	28%	13	38%	111	43%
TOTAL	37	100%	42	100%	37	100%	39	100%	34	100%	32	100%	34	100%	255	100%

*Correspondents who had less than five reports during the year(s) were not included in the study.

DO TELEVISION CHARACTERS REFLECT REALITY?

ANALYSES OF PRIME TIME CHARACTERS

BY

CORAL M. OHL
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

and

PRUDENCE C. FAXON
CALIFORNIA STATE POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY, POMONA

A PAPER PRESENTED TO
ASSOCIATION FOR EDUCATION IN JOURNALISM AND MASS COMMUNICATION
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN

DO TELEVISION CHARACTERS REFLECT REALITY? ANALYSES OF PRIME TIME CHARACTERS

OVERVIEW

If television is truly a reflection of society it would seem logical that the demographics of prime time television would reflect the demographics of the changing society today. This current study is a content analysis of prime time characters in the 90s. It examines sex, martial status, race, age, occupation, and social economic standing.

Much has been written examining the characters portrayed by women on prime time television programs. New characters like Murphy Brown and Roseanne are said to reflect the change in women's roles and their status on television. It is important to continue to study how television portrays women to see if these portrays are realistic and to determine if this constitutes a trend. Have women really overcome the "June Cleaver" wife and homemaker stereotypes? Have they actually reached equal status with men as demonstrated by sheer numbers of male and female characters presented on television?

If television is a reflection of the society around it in the 90s, we would expect to find stronger female role models and increased numbers of minorities and single partners. However, a recent study by the National Commission of Working Women and Women in Film found television has "as many extra-terrestrial aliens characters as Hispanic and Asian characters."[1] Their study examined 555 characters in 80 different programs from the 1990 season.

Studies by the commission have focused on recurring characters in prime time series. Their methodology included a two-month monitoring period during which random episodes of programs were taped and coded. They found most television characters were middle class and in their 20s and 30s. Most leading roles on the programs studied belonged to men. They also found a greater number of television characters with professional careers then in society. As far as race, 20% of all characters on the programs studied were minority men and women. Most minority characters were black, (84%). Hispanic, Asian and American Indian characters were in little evidence. The report concluded that regarding marital status, men were far more likely to be single then women.

RESEARCH

Content analyses have been used to examine everything from portrayals of the elderly to sexual intimacy on television.[2] Sample weeks of television have been analyzed to understand how organizations are presented on prime time television.[3]

A study examining occupations over a 15 year period found changes with women who were appearing in more occupational roles and outside of the home. However, the authors state "Although the results show that some changes have been made, women are still predominately portrayed in the home while men are more frequently shown in the business world.[4] In the 80s, a study found more professional women than in the past 30 years and concluded that these new roles were less stereotyped. [5] These characters were also making a stronger more visible effort to explore their personal problems realistically on television.

Commercials have also been examined on a demographic basis. A 1987 study found an increase in the number of female and non-white characters represented in children's commercials; but found overall, children's television advertising was predominately male and white.[6]

A study examining programs from a ten-year period between 1971-80 found the occurrences of female characters had increased.[7] The study also found that whites dominated the comedy drama and dramatic program areas, and that black females were extremely scarce. The conclusions suggested the trend would continue.

There are differences in the numbers of men and women, depending on the time of day a study is conducted. In comparing 80s demographic studies between daytime and prime time programs, soap operas had 49.2% female and 50% male characters while 29% female and 71% male characters were found on prime time programs. As far as race representation on television, day time was comprised of only 4.8 % black characters, while 9% of prime-time characters were black. Marital status for day time television consisted of 52% single, 31% married and 17% divorced characters.[8]

Even television's portrayal of social class has been examined by content analysis. A study analyzing the years 1946-78 concluded that there was an over-representation of the middle class on domestic situation comedies and an under-representation of the working class. During the same time era, it was a necessity for many middle class families to include a working wife in reality, but such a character only found in 13 series.[9]

Diana Meehan's 1983 study of female characters on prime-time television from the 50s up until the 80s reveals some alarming stereotypic behaviors and images.[10] Using an interpretive approach, Meehan identified and categorized ten different female character types. Dating from the early days of television in the 50s, Meehan's study covers a thirty-year period, falling ten years short of today's programs and only examines female characters.

To truly understand what is reflected on television, all characters portrayed need to be examined, not just females or just recurring characters. Otherwise, the argument could be made that television may generally portray the demographics of society but chooses to focus only on characters who can be most readily identified with by the majority of television viewers. For this reason, in the current study, all male and female characters in each prime time program were identified and evaluated. These characters were then analyzed to determine specific trends and typical portrayals viewed on today's television. Examining prime time television can provide a better understanding of how television depicts society in the 90s. This study is concerned with only one year's sample as demonstrated in one week of typical programing.

The questions this study examines are:

- Are men and women equally represented on prime time television?
- What are the predominate character demographics as displayed on prime time television?
- Are these demographics universal between male and female characters?
- How are minorities represented statistically during prime time?
- Do prime time television characters accurately reflect today's reality?

METHODOLOGY

The study consists of a content analysis of one week of prime time programs aired during the week of December 2 through 8, 1990. The sampling was taken during a non-"sweeps" period. Prime time consists of Sunday nights from 7 p.m. to 11 p.m., and Monday through Saturday nights, from 8 p.m. to 11 p.m., for a total of 22 hours of prime time broadcasting. The study examines programs from the three major networks; CBS, NBC and ABC, as well as Fox Broadcasting. It examines commercial programming for a total of 88 hours worth of broadcast viewing time. Prime time is targeted for the study because of its vast audience.

"Sweeps" periods were avoided because they would not accurately reflect typical prime time programming.

Several different types of television programs were not included in the study. These included television variety specials, or any variety type of program, game shows, and cartoons. The one exception was the Fox animated program, "The Simpsons," since it is a weekly prime time episodic series with major impact on viewers and deals with the family in society. Dramatizations such as Rescue 911 and Top Cop which are reenactments of true life experiences also were not coded. Made-for-television-movies were coded but theatrically released movies airing on prime time television were not. Chart 1 is a listing by network of the programs examined in this study.

Of the programs selected, characters were coded for sex, marital status, race, age, occupation and social-economic groupings. In addition, a preliminary analysis of whether a character was involved in violence was included in the coding.

It had been determined that all characters portrayed need to be examined, not just females or just recurring characters. For this reason, in the current study, all major male and female characters, not just recurring characters, in each prime time program were identified and evaluated for this study.

All characters who were coded were defined as characters who were involved actively or moved the plot in some way. Characters who served as background or for ambience were not coded. These included groups of people in working places, passers-by and any characters who spoke only one or two lines. These were not included in the coding.

A total of 70 programs from the four networks fit into the coding criteria and were examined. From these programs a total of 786 characters were identified as involved in the plot and therefore coded.

RESULTS

A total of 786 characters were coded for the week of December 2 through 8, 1990. Table 1 shows the breakdown by network. Chart 1 shows the programs included in the study. Overall, there were 426 males, 239 females and 121 kids. Adults and children were coded differently. When the adult catagories were combined with the kids category, there were 239 adult females and 57 kid females, for a total of 296 female characters. There were 426 adult males and 64 males kids for a total number of male characters of 490. As a result, 62% of all characters, adults and kids, were male while 38% were females. The percentages dropped in the male-female breakdown when removing the kids category. Without male and female kids, the totals changed to 64% males and 36% females.

TABLE 1

TOTAL CHARACTERS CODED

	MALES	FEMALES	KIDS	TOTALS
ABC	133	68	44	245
CBS	111	62	20	193
NBC	149	89	25	263
FOX	33	20	32	85
TOTALS	426	239	121	786

Table 2 show the breakdown by marital status. Most females were identified as single, in fact 52 %. Men were not so designated. The largest category of men were N/A or unknown marital status at 47%. Only 20% of the females were not identified by marital status. Overall, 22% of all characters were identified as married, 41% single and for 37% the marital status was unknown.

TABLE 2

ADULT MALE/ FEMALE BY MARITAL STATUS

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
MARRIED	77	67	144
SINGLE	150	125	275
N/A	199	47	246
total	426	239	665

Table 3 shows the demographics for race. The study found disappointing results as far as race was concerned. Overall, 83% of all characters were white; 86% of all females and 82% of all male characters. Black characters fared well with 13% of the total number of characters; 11% of all females and 15% of all males. However, Hispanics, Asians and Native Americans accounted for only 4% of all characters coded.

TABLE 3

ADULT MALE/ FEMALE BY RACE

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
WHITE	349	206	555
BLACK	62	27	89
HISPANIC	10	4	14
ASIAN	4	2	6
INDIAN	1		1
total	426	239	665

The study found the majority of adult males to be between the ages of 30 and 49 with the largest group, 31% being in the 40-49 age range. The second largest group were in the 30-39 age group and accounted for 30%. Women portrayed on television were younger. The largest group was the 30-39 age group with 44%. Overall, 35% of all adult characters fell in the 30-39 age group. Only 5% were coded in the 60+ age category. In all 55% of all adult characters on prime time televisions programs were under the age of 40. However, if the kids category is added, 62% of all characters coded were under the age of 40. Table 4 shows the age groups for adults.

TABLE 4

ADULT MALE/ FEMALE BY AGE

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
20-29	76	55	131
30-39	129	105	234
40-49	132	54	186
50-59	69	12	81
60+	20	13	33
Total	426	239	665

Most characters coded fit the category of professional. Overall, 38%

of all characters were coded as professionals. The second largest occupation category of male characters was that of cop characters which included detectives and private investigators. The second largest female was category was that of homemaker with 18%. Males were only identified with not having a job 8% of the time while women were identified as not having a job 13% of the time. Table 5 shows the occupational breakdown for adults characters. One problem classification in this category can be found with the characters who were identified as "bad guys," drug dealers or hired guns. Because these characters were not typically employed in some sort of stable occupation, they were classified in the categories of "no job" or job unknown", depending upon the plot information.

TABLE 5

ADULT MALE/FEMALE BY OCCUPATION

	MALE	**FEMALE**	**TOTAL**
COP	67	10	77
PROFESSIONAL	181	75	256
CLERICAL	5	24	29
HOMEMAKER	1	42	43
SALES/SERVICE	56	32	88
BLUE COLLAR	32	2	34
NO JOB	37	31	68
UNKNOWN	47	23	70
total	426	239	665

3[illegible]7

Economic results are shown in Table 6. Most characters coded were in the middle class range. Very few characters were identified in the poor category. The struggling category was higher with 9% of the total. However, some of that percentage was made up of westerns in which cowboys and other characters were identified as struggling. Overall, 80% of all adults were identified as middle class and 9% were wealthy.

TABLE 6

ADULT MALE/ FEMALE BY SOCIAL ECONOMIC

	MALE	FEMALE	TOTAL
WEALTHY	32	25	57
MIDDLE CLASS	343	193	536
STRUGGLING (LOWER MIDDLE)	42	20	62
POOR	7	1	8
N/A	2		2
TOTAL	426	239	665

The number of adult characters on prime time having children of kids under the age of 18 were also coded. There were 39 male characters with 82 children for an average of 2.10 children per male having a child. For female characters, there were 42 characters identified with 83 children for an average of 1.97 children per female character. Overall 17.5% of the female characters had children, while only 9.1% of the males were identified as having children.

As for the kids category, kids were any children 18 or younger. Kids were coded in the categories of male/female, race and social economic. There were a total of 121 kids coded: 64 males and 57 females. The percentages found in the kids categories generally reflected the adults in the same areas coded. Kids were only coded for race, social economic, and sex. As far as race, there were 97 white, 22 black, 1 Hispanic and 1 Asian, for a total of 80% white and 20% minority. However, with only one Hispanic and one Asian, each of these groups were less than one percent of the total. Kids were also found to be financially well off, with 81% coded middle class, 12% in the struggling category and only 2 kid characters coded as poor.

CONCLUSIONS

The study consists of a content analysis of one week of prime time programs aired during the week of December 2 through 8, 1990. A total of 70 programs from the four networks were examined. From these programs a total of 786 characters were identified as significantly involved in the plot and therefore coded in the six categories of sex, age, race, occupation, social economic and number of children..

• Are men and women equally represented on prime time television? The study concluded that men and women are not portrayed equally in numbers or demographically on prime time television. The breakdown of adult characters resulted in 64% male and 36% female. Women tend to be portrayed in the younger age groups.

• What are the predominate character demographics as displayed on prime time television? Demographically-speaking characters on prime time television live a middle class existence with few instances of portrayals of struggling or economically deprived lifestyles. Characters on prime time television are on the whole financially secure, very seldom seen to be struggling or poor. Families are most likely to have 2 children.

• Are these demographics universal between male and female characters? Females are twice as likely to be portrayed as having children as males. The establishment of their marital status is more important than a male's. Male characters are more likely to be cops and in law enforcement, while female characters are more likely not to have their careers identified within the context of the program.

• How are minorities represented statistically during prime time? A disturbingly small number of minorities, other than black characters were found on prime time television. Not only are television programs not built around minority characters, minorities are not even visible as minor characters. Only one Native American was seen during the entire week. Of 786 character, only 6 Asian and 14 Hispanics were coded. This study supported the findings of other studies on prime television that while there was an increase of minority blacks there were not equal representation for other minority groups.

• Do prime time television characters accurately reflect today's reality? Television does not portray reality. From the results of the week's sampling in six categories, this study supports the finding of "What's Wrong with This Picture" by the National Commission of Working Women of Wider Opportunities for Women and Women in Film. Unfortunately, television does not reflect a true reality but merely a viewer's fantasy or perhaps the programers perception of the viewer's fantasy.

PROGRAMS CODED

CBS

MURDER SHE WROTE
TV MOVIE "FATAL IMAGE"
EVENING SHADE
MAJOR DAD
MURPHY BROWN
DESIGNING WOMEN
THE TRIALS OF ROSIE O'NEILL
TV MOVIE" MENU FOR MURDER"
JAKE AND THE FATMAN
WIOU
THE FLASH
DOCTOR, DOCTOR
KNOTS'S LANDING
UNCLE BUCK
OVER MY DEAD BODY
DALLAS
BROKEN BADGES
WISEGUY

NBC

LIFESTORIES
TV MOVIE "DECORATION DAY"
FRESH PRINCE OF BEL AIR
FERRIS BUELLER
TV MOVIE "WHEN WILL I BE LOVED?"
MATLOCK
IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT
LAW AND ORDER
MIDNIGHT CALLER
HUNTER
THE COSBY SHOW
A DIFFERENT WORLD
CHEERS
GRAND
LA LAW
FULL HOUSE
QUANTUM LEAP
NIGHT COURT
WINGS
THE YOUNG RIDERS
THE FANELLI BOY
THE GOLDEN GIRLS
EMPTY NEST
CAROL AND CO.
AMERICAN DREAMER

ABC

MCGYVER
WHO'S THE BOSS
HEAD OF THE CLASS
ROSEANNE
COACH
THIRTYSOMETHING
THE WONDER YEARS
DOOGIE HOWSER, M.D.
MARRIED PEOPLE
COP ROCK
FATHER DOWLING MYSTERIES
GABRIEL'S FIRE
FAMILY MATTERS
PERFECT STRANGERS
GOING PLACES
YOUNG RIDERS
CHINA BEACH
TWIN PEAKS

FOX

TRUE COLORS
PARKER LEWIS
MARRIED WITH CHILDREN
GET A LIFE
GOOD GRIEF
THE SIMPSONS
BABES
BEVERLY HILLS 90210
AGAINST THE LAW

CHART 1 PROGRAMS CODED

REFERENCES

1. Sally Steenland, "What's Wrong With This Picture? The Status of Women on Screen and Behind the Camera in Entertainment TV," National Commission on Working Women of Wider Opportunities for Women (1990).

2. Bradley S. Greenberg, *Life on Television Content Analyses of U.S. TV Drama* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corp.,1980).

3. Leah Vande Berg and Nick Trujillo, *Organizational Life on Television* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corp.,1989).

4. Carol L. Ferrant, Andrew M. Haynes and Sarah Kingsley, "Image of Women in Television Advertising," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 30: 231-237 (1988).

5. Diana Reep and Faye H. Dambrot, "Television's Professional Women: Working with Men in the 1980s," *Journalism Quarterly* 64;376-381 (1987).

6. Daniel Riffe, Helene Goldson, Kelly Saxton and Yang-Chou Yu, "Females and Minorities in TV Ads in 1987 Saturday Children's Programs." *Journalism Quarterly*, 66, 129-136 (1989).

7. John F. Seggar, Jeffrey K. Hafen, and Helena Hannoner-Gladden, "Television's Portrays of Minorities and Women in Drama and Comedy Dramas 1971-80," *Journal of Broadcasting* 25; 277-288 (1981).

8. Mary Cassata and Thomas Skill, *Life on Daytime Television: Tuning-In American Serial Drama* (Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing Corp.,1983), p.11.

9. Richard Butsch and Lynda M. Glennon, "Social Class: Frequency Trend in Domestic Situation Comedy,1946-1978," *Journal of Broadcasting*, 27; 77-81 (1983).

10. Diana M. Meehan, *Ladies of the Evening: Women Characters of Prime Time Television* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press,1983).

TELEVISION NEWS CONSULTANTS: EXPLORATION OF THEIR EFFECT ON CONTENT

Betsey Peale and Mark Harmon
School of Mass Communications, Texas Tech University
Lubbock, TX 79409 (806) 742-3382/3385

Scholarly studies and rating surveys agree television news has become the public's most important source of information (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). On a national level, the most recent Roper survey (1989) indicates 66% of those surveyed rely on television more than any other medium as their primary source of news; and half report television is their sole news source.

Local newscasts have become just as important as network news programs. Rapid growth in the 1960s of new TV technologies which permitted live, up-to-the-minute reports of breaking news "enabled stations to turn trivial local events into sensational, colorful dramas" (Rapping, 1987, p.43).

Consequently critics argue "television messages have become so familiar to us that they appear to be The Simple Truth. . . . In fact, we do not see the world as it is. We see it as TV presents it to us" (Cross, 1983, p.12).

The implication is that television newscasts have become "the arena for public recognition of significant events" (Altheide, 1976, p.25), and require a new definition of information. When the salience of news events is predominantly affected by what we see on broadcast news, our whole frame of reference becomes influenced by those whose responsibility it is to transform events into news.

Traditionally, television news critics and scholars looked at local television news selection in terms of audience perception, and directed us toward effects research. Following in the footsteps of initial newspaper studies, the researchers approached the subject from one of three perspectives: agenda-setting, gatekeeping, and agenda-building.

Agenda-setting is an interactional process (DeFleur & Ball-Rokeach, 1982). The media selectively choose topics and information to present to the public. The public, in turn, sorts this information in accordance with their own interests. The agenda-setting perspective looks at local television news content in terms of specific issues manifested at one time and later adopted by the public in some measurable behavior such as voting.

Agenda-setting is a useful technique for studying some passing and limited effects of broadcast news content on the salience of specific issues. However, it is too narrowly defined and fails to acknowledge the full scope of the newscast. The content or agenda of local television news is more than issues. Agenda may be influenced by the build-up of topics over time, the amount of time given to a subject, the cumulative development of a newscast theme, the manner of presentation--all aspects of content beyond specific issues.

The second approach looked at local television news content from the point of view of the gatekeeper--usually a news producer, assignment editor, or news director--and how that gatekeeper exercises news judgment. Gatekeeping research expanded the definition of the local news agenda to encompass not only issues but also other aspects of content such as topic selection, story length, positioning, and presentation. This approach recognized that someone must ultimately exercise news judgment and make decisions involving all aspects of local television news content.

Although gatekeeping was useful in developing a broader definition of television news content, the research is limited because it views the gatekeeper as an independent authority. In reality, many people, organizations, and institutional factors such as geography, station resources and time may influence what a gatekeeper can do and what kind of news judgment he or she may make (Harmon, 1989).

The agenda-building perspective is the third and most recent approach to the study of news content selection. Agenda-building research investigated the origin of issues in the media's agenda. This research recognizes there are people who seek to influence the agenda, and organizations designed specifically to influence news judgment. Such organizations hope to influence the public agenda by building the television news agenda for the gatekeeper, largely by providing easy-to-cover "pseudo-events" at convenient times for local TV news crews.

All three approaches yield valuable clues to the nature of local TV news content, but all must be understood from an institutional perspective. As DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1982) pointed out, the first requirement of a true system is self-preservation. In order to survive, the media must provide the type of product or service the market demands.

When applied to television news, the institutional perspective becomes an umbrella covering all contributing variables to the content selection process and short term effects of agenda-setting. The institutional perspective also answers some of the criticism leveled at broadcast journalists. It explains how traditional journalistic values of proximity, timeliness, and prominence can be altered by the institutional framework of the medium to produce more stories that depend on routine channels which maintain the status quo--or how time-honored "news values" such as human interest, novelty and conflict are translated into the entertaining, the sensational and the negative.

Organizational limitations and corporate financial goals make it necessary for news directors to mold news and information into entertaining newscasts that attract viewers (Fink, 1988). To satisfy this requirement, policies are developed and procedures are formulated to "reduce the uncertainties of news to manageable proportions" (Epstein, 1973, p.259).

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is surprising that no one has looked at consulting firms (who, after all, are specifically designed to be agenda-builders) and examined their effect on content. Virtually no empirical studies address the contributions of television consultants to the agenda-building process of broadcast news. The literature examines many of the variables which contribute to the agenda of television newscasts, but most of the research fails to look at the big picture, and only rarely makes reference to the consulting firms which frame that picture.

By the early 1970s, TV news had become a money maker in virtually every market. "Everyone needed a 'media consultant'--it was not enough to have a general sense of what was wanted" (Rapping, 1987, p.46). But "media consultant", as originally conceived by the partnership of Philip McHugh and Peter Hoffman in 1962, did not mean news specialist. Their intention was to advise on a wide range of television programming. As local stations surrendered programming to the networks, however, the consulting partnership became limited to locally-produced newscasts (Powers, 1977).

The increasing popularity of the news consultant also was due, in part, to the fierce competition that still exists on the local level. Today, most cities have affiliate stations for all three networks, at least one independent station (and often more), and a vast array of cable channels all seeking the largest share of the audience (Fink, 1988, p.135).

Quoted in a recent article (Frankola, 1990) Charles Warner, a former manager of radio stations in New York and Chicago and currently a broadcast management consultant, says "news directors finally came to the realization that news is the business of getting ratings, not some high-falutin' journalism business. They finally realized you have to have research if you want to get in touch with customers" (p.15).

From an institutional perspective, ratings are the criteria by which stations gauge the quality of broadcast news. "A loss of a ratings point on a local news program can be worth between $200,000 and $1 million a year" (Westin, 1982, p.64). News standards or values are largely determined by audience interests or tastes as perceived by the consulting firms that conduct audience research studies for local stations.

And consultants, by their own admission, are more concerned with the market than with journalism (e.g. Powers, 1977, pp.80-81). They are hired to give local stations an edge against the competition in the race for ratings. While no studies on the effects of consultants could be found in the research literature, several professional broadcast journalists and TV news critics have described consultants' function in the television news industry.

> [The consultant] advises on the production values of a newscast, the attractiveness of the set, the "atmosphere" among the "personalities," the lucidity of the writing. He may comment on the appearance of this anchorman or that sportscaster. He may--on the basis of his surveys of "attitudes and opinions"--suggest some broad ranges of interest among the viewing audience....(Powers, 1977, p.81)

Although consultants argue this advice is designed soley to create a more appealing newscast format, their influence may have an incidental but very important effect on the content of that newscast, largely by influencing the daily routine and the newscast format. In a recent study, Berkowitz (1990) concluded that "the structure of the newscast format had almost as much to do with story selection as did news merits of the potential stories" (p.66).

Formatting is accomplished in broadcast news by adapting events to organizational "rules and procedures for defining, recognizing, selecting, organizing, and presenting information as news" (Altheide, 1985, p.346). Local stations often will develop these formatting rules and procedures based on the research findings of consulting firms.

> The procedures vary only slightly. First, there generally is a survey of the station's broadcast area to determine the strengths and weaknesses of the news presentations. On-the-scene visits by the consultants follow, and from those come specific recommendations about whom to hire or fire as on-air personnel, whom to hire as producers and how to create a "look" and pace for broadcast. (Westin, 1982, p.212)

Consultants insist, however, that their recommendations are based on audience research. "If anyone dictates to a news director, it's the public, not the consultant" (Frankola, 1990, p.13).

In his study of television news formats, Altheide (1985) found five basic elements or characteristics common to broadcast news reports: accessibility, visual quality, drama and action, perceived audience relevance, and encapsulation and thematic unity (p.346). The presence of one or more of these elements in a news event tends to resolve some of the practical concerns of the medium. Most of the literature examining the methods of selecting stories for broadcast news consists of empirical studies which support these formatting criteria.

Echoing Altheide's idea of thematic unity in television formatting, other critics have argued that broadcast news is "clustered" into neatly packaged segments (Adams & Schreibman, 1987). "A cluster consists of a general topic, subdivided into two or more stories, and suffused with one or more on-going themes" (p.78).

In essence, "News formats inform the decisions about where to look for news, as well as what news looks like" (Arlen, 1969, p.349). But because TV news is essentially visual in nature, any event or issue which can be covered visually will have a better chance of being included on the newscast agenda. In addition to thematic unity and topic mix considerations, a story's newsworthiness may also be judged by its visual quality. Television news agenda-building may be confined by how well a news event can be visually represented.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Indeed, Chet Huntley once commented that the broadcast industry was so preoccupied with the fear of dullness and low ratings that awesome subjects were neglected because they were not good TV (Cross, 1983). "Stories about banks robbing people," Huntley said, "cannot be made as entertaining as shots of people robbing banks" (cited in Cross, p.72).

TV news critic Ron Powers (1977) outlined what he called the consultant's "blueprint for audience-building" (p.73). Powers maintained that this blueprint contains procedural recommendations which include a high story count with very limited time for each report, and heavy use of visuals whenever possible.

Many broadcast professionals and TV critics have expressed concern over the apparent degree of influence consultants have in the newsroom. Long-respected broadcast journalist and news anchor Walter Cronkite once gave a stern warning to the industry, referring to television news practices as becoming "cosmetic, pretty packaging...editing by consultancy" (Batra, 1987, p.152). The limited research that exists points to the important role of consultants in "packaging" newscasts, and thereby indirectly influencing the agenda evident in newscast content.. Empirical studies are necessary to examine whether consultant influence is building the agenda of local television news.

The intent of this study was to add to the existing agenda-building research by empirically testing to determine if, in fact, consultant influence can be detected in the presentation and content of local television newscasts.

METHODS

Using the expanded definition of agenda encompassing all aspects of content, this study looked at one such agenda-builder hired by news organizations to make recommendations which ultimately affect the newscast content. The research goal was to determine to what degree, if any, a television news consulting firm builds the local television news agenda for the gatekeeper. Although one cannot prove causal links between what the consultant recommends and what appears on the air, it would be useful, and was the purpose of this study, to draw associations between the consultants used and evident differences in the content of local television newscasts.

This study was based on the premise that broadcast news agenda-building research would be best served by considering the newscast as one complete entity. The agenda referred to in this study is not framed in the traditional context of issues, but in the institutional perspective which takes into account the entire realm of newscast content. The real influence-wielding effect may not lie in the issues of news stories, nor even in the selection of stories to be aired--the traditional avenue of gatekeeping research. The power of the newscast to influence the salience of issues and events may encompass the entire range of elements in a newscast--the actors, the images, the sounds and the words.

The focus of this study was similar to what Graber (1987) referred to in her "gestalt" coding approach to television news as "the totality of meaning that results from the interaction of verbal and visual story elements" (p.74). And to the extent that news consultants develop procedural guidelines for shaping the format of newscasts, they are major contributors to this "voice of the news" and a primary link in the multi-variable chain of the agenda-building process of broadcast news.

To establish an assocition between newscast characteristics and consultant influence, the research design of this study consists of content analyses of a sample of television news stories. In accordance with 21 specifically defined coding categories, the researcher viewed and coded a national sample of sixteen randomly selected local newscasts collected by two independent news consulting firms. This resulted in a total case sample of 242 stories.

The sample consisted of both early and late news reports taped by volunteers in small and large markets for Audience Research and Development in Dallas and Primo Newservice, Inc. in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. Of the 242 cases, 55% (132 stories) were taken from late newscasts and 45% (110 stories) were from early newscasts. The newscasts were taped at different times of the year between 1987 and 1990 for the purpose of evaluating clients and their competitors.

Three different consulting firms were represented by the sample. Of the 16 newscasts, 4 were consulted by ARD, 4 by Primo, and 4 by Magid (another leading consultant in Marion, Iowa). The remaining 4 newscasts had no known consultant at the time of broadcast.

The news story was the unit of analysis for this study. A news story was defined as any topic, event, report or statement by the anchor or introduced by the anchor and treated as a single unit. The weather report, sports report, and news or promotional "bumpers" were also considered as case units. Of the 242 cases, 68 were from newscasts consulted by Magid, 61 were from ARD, 61 Primo, and 52 were from non-consulted newscasts.

Coding categories kept track of: consultant, market size, early versus late newscasts, story length, story position (first, second, third, etc.), story initiative (spontaneous, planned events, or reporter enterprise), use of graphics, and geographic orientation (metro area, area of dominant influence, state, region, national, or international).

The "voice" of a story was generally determined by the tone and word choice in the story lead. Stories which made frequent reference to "I, me" or the station name or call letters were coded as first person. Examples of first person stories would include story leads such as, "KAKE news has learned....", or "As we reported last night....", and "I talked with the mayor and he assured me...."

Second person stories often referred specifically to the audience, the community, or used the word "you" frequently. Stories urging the audience not to travel due to inclement weather, or telling "you" about important events or issues in "our community" are examples of second person stories.

Stories were coded as third person if the emphasis was on "they" or no pronouns were used at all. For example, a story with a lead such as "On Capitol Hill today, legislators passed a bill...." would be coded as third person.

Story treatment was coded to determine if either consulted or non-consulted newscasts relied more heavily on video presentation of news content, and to ascertain anchor or reporter emphasis. Treatment categories included: reader, voice-over, voice-over with video tape recording, anchor package, reporter package, reporter studio or newsroom segment with VTR, live remote, bumper, sports report, and weather report.

Other production elements that encroached on the actual newshole of a newscast were coded as bumpers. These included transitions, teases, and promotions. The sports and weather reports were both coded as single story treatments.

Story topic was coded using a modified Deutschmann system of classification (1959). Story topic was coded to determine whether the percentage of content topics differed from consulted to non-consulted news reports. Topic codes included: government, violence/crime, economy, sports (for stories outside the regular sports report), education, accidents/disaster, public health & welfare, weather (for stories outside the regular weather report), politics/campaigns, general human interest, agriculture, other, and not applicable.

The remaining story characteristics were coded as absent, present, or not applicable. They were included in the analysis to determine how much was added to the newscast in the form of visuals and other stylistic techniques often associated with consultants, and to provide some indication of the amount of substance or actual news content in a newscast.

Presence or absence coding categories included: natural sound on tape (coded for voice-over stories or voice-over with VTR), banter or chit-chat between anchors/reporters, and anchor/reporter two- or three-shot. The final six categories pertained to package reports only and included: touching or pointing by reporter/anchor, stooping or turning by reporter/anchor, walking by reporter/anchor, field stand-up report, reaction shot of anchor/reporter, and anchor statement tagged to package.

RESULTS

The findings indicate that consultants do leave a mark on local television newscasts. Although there were many similarities between consulted and non-consulted news stories, results of analysis were statistically significant for 9 of the 17 coded variables. Some differences were evident both between consulted and non-consulted newscasts but most notably among the consulted sub-samples.

The use of bumpers proved to be a fairly clear consultant marker. The non-consulted newscasts did not use a single bumper. The only reason the factor was not statistically significant was because the Primo newscasts also used few bumpers, while ARD and Magid newscasts used them extensively.

The use of multiple anchor shots was the only variable with a statistically significant correlation between consulted and non-consulted sub-samples not accounted for by differences among consultants. Although Primo and the non-consulted sub-sample both tended to include multiple anchor shots less than Magid and ARD, the non-consulted preference for this variable was considerably weaker and accounted for the association (see Table 1).

This tendency of non-consulted stories to correspond with consulted stories may be a result of what Harmon (1989) described as "the cross-pollination effect [that] leads to local TV newscasts of very predictable style and content" (p.136). Anchor emphasis, video enhancement, preoccupation with the sensational, and an abundance of local news is a formula for television that may be more the result of the institutional framework of the medium than an indication of specific consultant influence.

Nevertheless, results of this study reflected a discernable influence of consultants in both the presentation and content of news stories. There were some interesting differences and statistically significant correlations between the four sub-samples when compared individually.

Overall, Primo appeared to account for most of the more statistically significant cosmetic differences among the consulted sub-samples. Primo tended to use less natural sound and fewer multiple anchor shots. Although all three consultants preferred to emphasize the anchor in story treatment, Primo also tended to use more video enhancement of anchor stories than both Magid or ARD (see Tables 2).

When one examines reporter emphasis variables among the three consulted sub-samples, Primo demonstrated the only significant difference by including shots of the reporter stooping/turning in 8 of 15 package stories, while Magid and ARD had this feature in none of a total of 27 packages. (Stooping and turning were present in only two of nine non-consulted packages.)

ARD varied significantly between the two consulted sub-samples only in story treatment and the use of anchor tags. Although both Primo and Magid preferred voice-over story treatment, ARD tended to use more straight readers. The sub-sample also ran more anchor tags at the end of stories than either of the other two consulted sub-samples (see Tables 3 and 4).

These cosmetic-specific differences may indicate direct consultant influence on the gatekeeper and indirect influence on the newscast agenda. A preference for video enhancement may preclude news stories that are less easily presented visually. Using promotional bumpers subtracts time from the newshole, which may mean fewer news stories.

The Magid sub-sample appeared to account for most of the content-specific differences. Reflecting a preference for more short stories per newscast, Magid contained the largest number of stories between consulted samples and the highest percentage of stories less than 30 seconds in length. The sub-sample also represented the largest number of second person stories, suggesting a preference for "news you can use" (see Tables 5 and 6).

Magid also appeared to prefer stories about the metro area more than the other consultants, and was less diverse in terms of geographic orientation. Primo, however, also demonstrated a preference for ADI area stories, but still maintained proportionately more story representation in other areas (see Table 7).

Although all the consultant sub-samples tended to air more general human interest stories, Magid appeared to prefer news of accidents/disasters more than the other two consultants. Again, Primo demonstrated a similar preference for violence/crime (see Table 8).

These content-specific differences also suggest consultant influence in the complex process of newscast agenda-building. If a faster pace is the preferred format, gatekeepers may air more short stories that contain less information and only headline the news event. A preference for news of violence or disasters may sensitize the gatekeeper to select more sensational stories.

The non-consulted sub-sample tended to correspond more with Primo in terms of cosmetic-specific variables and with Magid in terms of content-specific variables. This explains the lack of significant differences between consulted and non-consulted news stories.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Local television is rapidly becoming a prime source of news. Those responsible for the news decisions that transform everyday events into the sights and sounds of the evening newscast are also held responsible for building the public agenda of issues and events. But how much of that responsibility actually rests on the individual shoulders of the traditional television news gatekeeper? This study was undertaken to determine to what degree consultant influence outside the newsroom affects news decisions and the content of local newscasts.

Researchers investigating the news agenda traditionally have approached the subject primarily in terms of issues, and have concentrated more on effects than on content. But the agenda framed by local television news is more than issues. It exists within the institutional framework of the television medium, and encompasses all aspects of content.

Of particular concern to this study was the potential for influencing the agenda--in the broadest sense of the word--through the cumulative development of a newscast theme or format. Examining the newscast as a complete entity, evidence of recurring elements--the amount of time given to news topics, the manner in which stories are presented, etc,--contribute to a totality of meaning that ultimately influences the audience perception of news.

Consequently, the degree to which consultants are responsible for developing guidelines that shape newscast format is also indicative of consultant influence in building the local television news agenda for the gatekeeper.

To detect this influence, the study examined 242 news stories for evidence of differences in newscast content between consulted and non-consulted newscasts. Samples from four consulting firms were chosen with the underlying assumption that correlations between consulted and non-consulted newscasts would be evident despite competitive practices among consultants.

Excepting the association of bumpers and multiple-anchor shots with consulted newscasts, those correlations did not emerge. However, several "markers" of individual consultants were evident.

Magid newscasts featured the shortest stories, reliance on local accidents and disaster, and use of first- and second-person references. Primo newscasts stressed video enhancement, plus reporters stooping and turning during their "stand-ups" in packages. The ARD newscasts showed more interest in the news of outlying communities, plus a willingness to use "reader" stories without videotape enhancement.

The findings of this study indicate that consultants do leave their mark on local television newscasts. The direction and degree of that influence, however, may depend on the consultant, and future research needs to study consultants in terms of predictability. Consultant influence on the cumulative effect of watching the same newscast each evening may be an important part of agenda-setting that requires further investigation.

REFERENCES

Adams, W., & Schreibman, F. (Eds.). (1978). Television network news. Wahsington, D.C.: George Washington University.

Altheide, D.L. (1976). Creating reality (Vol. 33). Beverly Hills: Sage Publications.

Altheide, D.L. (1985). Impact of format and ideology on TV news coverage of Iran. Journalism Quarterly, 62, 346-351.

Arlen, M.J. (1969). Living-room war. New York: The Viking Press.

Batra, N.D. (1987). The Hour of television: critical approaches. Metuchen, N.J.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc.

Berkowitz, D. (1990). Refining the gatekeeping metaphor for local television news. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34(1). pp. 55-68.

Cross, D.W. (1983). Mediaspeak. New York: Copward-McCann.

DeFleur, M.L., & Ball-Rokeach, S. (1982). Theories of mass communication (4th ed.). New York: Longman.

Deutschmann, P.J. (1959). News content of twelve metroploitan dailies. Cincinnati, OH: Scripps-Howard Research.

Epstein, E.J. (1973). News from nowhere. New York: Random House.

Fink, C.C. (1988). Media ethics in the newsroom and beyond. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Frankola, K. (1990). Who uses consultants and why? Communicator, August, 12-15.

Graber, D.A. (1987). Television news without pictures? Critical Studies in Mass Communication, 49(1), 74-78.

Harmon, M.D. (1989a). Local television news gatekeeping (Doctoral dissertation, Ohio University, 1988). University Microfilms International.

Iyengar , S., & Kinder, D.R. (1987). News that matters. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Powers, R. (1977). The newscasters. New York: St. Martin's Press.

Rapping, E. (1987). The looking glass world of nonfiction TV. Boston: South End Press.

Roper Organization, Inc. (1989). Public attitudes toward television and other media in a time of change (No. 14). New York, N.Y.: Television Informatio Office.

Westin, A. (1982). Newswatch. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Table 1. Anchor two-shot and three-shot percentages: Consulted/Non-consulted comparison

	Consulted	Non-consulted
Absent	48.2	71.15
Present	51.8	28.85
	N = 139	N = 52

p = .0075
df = 1
Chi square = 7.139 (with continuity correction)
Contingency coefficient = .201

Anchor two-shot and three-shot Percentages: Sub-sample Comparison

	Magid	ARD	Primo	Non-consulted
Absent	42.86	41.86	55.74	71.15
Present	57.14	58.14	44.26	28.85
	N = 35	N = 43	N = 61	N = 52

p = .0145
df = 3
Chi square = 10.535
Contingency coefficient = .229

Table 2. Story Treatment Percentages: Sub-sample Comparison

	Magid	ARD	Primo	Non-consulted
Reader	18.33	30.19	13.21	20.45
Voice-Over	26.67	13.21	32.08	31.82
Voice-Over with VTR	18.33	11.32	22.64	25
Anchor Package	0	0	0	2.27
Reporter Package	15	20.75	15.09	15.91
Newsroom Segment	3.33	3.77	7.55	4.55
Live Remote	5	1.89	5.66	0
Bumper	13.33	18.87	3.77	0
	N = 60	N = 53	N = 53	N = 44

p = .0557
df = 21
Chi square = 32.211
Contingency coefficient = .365

Table 3. Story Treatment Percentages: ARD/Non-consulted Comparison

	ARD	Non-consulted
Reader	30.19	20.45
Voice-Over	13.21	31.82
Voice-Over with VTR	11.32	25
Anchor Package	0	2.27
Reporter Package	20.75	15.91
Newsroom Segment	3.77	4.55
Live Remote	1.89	0
Bumper	18.87	0
	N = 53	N = 44

p = .0121
df = 7
Chi square = 17.972
Contingency coefficient = .395

Table 4. Anchor Tag Percentages: Sub-sample Comparison

	Magid	ARD	Primo	Non-consulted
Absent	84.62	57.14	93.33	55.56
Present	15.38	42.86	6.67	44.44
	N = 13	N = 14	N = 15	N = 9

p = .0596
df = 3
Chi square = 7.423 Contingency coefficient = .356

Table 5. Story Length in Seconds

	Total Sample	Magid	ARD	Primo	Non-consulted	Consulted
Minimum	7	7	8	11	15	7
Maximum	225	156	206	225	178	225
Range	218	149	198	214	163	218
Sum	11612	3034	2989	2971	2618	8994
Mean	55.30	50.57	56.40	56.06	59.50	54.18
Mode*	20-30	20-30	20-30	none	20-30	20-30
	N= 210	N = 60	N = 53	N = 53	N = 44	N = 166

*Measured in ten second intervals

Table 6. Story Person Percentages: Sub-sample Comparison

	Magid	ARD	Primo	Non-consulted
1st Person	15.54	17.02	13.46	9.52
2nd Person	32.76	27.66	15.38	14.29
3rd Person	51.72	55.32	71.15	76.19
	N = 58	N = 47	N = 52	N = 42

p = .1311
df = 6
Chi square = 9.85 Contingency coefficient = .217

Table 7. Geographic Orientation Percentages: Sub-sample Comaparison

	Magid	ARD	Primo	Non-consulted
Metro/ City	50	29.55	26.53	44.74
ADI	17.24	11.36	36.73	10.53
State	13.79	20.45	10.2	10.53
Adjoining States	0	9.09	0	0
National	18.97	27.27	4.08	5.26
	N = 58	N = 44	N = 49	N = 38

p = .0022
df = 15
Chi square = 35.329
Contingency coefficient = .397

Table 8. Story Topic Percentages: Sub-sample Comparison

	Magid	ARD	Primo	Non-consulted
Government	5.17	11.54	15.69	18.18
Violence/ Crime	6.9	17.31	19.61	4.55
Economy	8.62	15.38	3.92	9.09
Sports	1.72	0	0	2.27
Education	5.17	3.85	1.96	0
Accidents/ Disasters	18.97	5.77	11.76	13.64
Public Health	5.17	7.69	3.92	11.36
Weather	5.17	5.77	0	2.27
Politics/ Campaigns	6.9	0	0	0
Human Interest	20.69	28.85	21.57	27.27
Agriculture	0	0	1.96	0
Other	15.52	3.85	19.61	11.36
	N = 58	N = 52	N = 51	N = 44

p = .0395
df = 33
Chi Square = 48.557
Contingency coefficient = .438

LYING IN PRIME TIME:
ETHICAL EGOISM IN SITUATION COMEDIES

by

Larry Z. Leslie
Assistant Professor
Department of Mass Communication
University of South Florida
Tampa, FL 33620-5550
(813) 974-2591

Presented to the Mass Communication and Society Division
at the annual AEJMC convention, August, 1991, in Boston, MA.

LYING IN PRIME TIME:
ETHICAL EGOISM IN SITUATION COMEDIES

ABSTRACT

The growing interest of all segments of society in ethics and ethical behavior has not manifested itself in an ethical analysis of television programming beyond a journalism context. This study examines one social/ethical issue--lying--in prime time network television situation comedies. Results show sitcom characters who lie are motivated primarily by self-interest. This egoistic approach raises questions of ethical maturity and provides a model of behavior that may have negative implications for society.

LYING IN PRIME TIME:
ETHICAL EGOISM IN SITUATION COMEDIES

The 1980's may come to be known to future generations as a decade of ethical incongruities. On the one hand, major political, economic, social, and religious scandals were revealed. The exploits of Ivan Boesky, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Oliver North, Gary Hart, Joseph Biden, Ed Meese, Janet Cooke, Pete Rose, and a host of others dominated the news. The presidential election campaign of 1988 was said to be the most misleading and misdirected in recent memory. Questions were regularly raised about the advertising practices and public relations campaigns of both major party candidates.

Ethical problems were not limited to public figures or those in powerful positions. They touched many aspects of our daily lives. Resume fraud continued to be a problem for many employers. One survey reported a "stunning 80 percent of checked resumes included lies about applicants' job histories ("Resume Fraud," 1989, p. 25). More startling is that "nobody expects job candidates to be totally candid ... a little gilding of the lily is understandable--and acceptable" (p. 25).

Education had its share of ethical problems, too. Surveys conducted in 1988 indicated "36.6 percent of freshmen students cheated, while 57.1 percent admitted to copying another's work" (Tillman, 1989, p.1). These figures are up substantially since 1966, when 20.6 percent of students admitted cheating.

Instances of students buying class notes from a note-selling service came under attack and sales of specialized term papers continued to be a problem for many universities (Harris, 1989). A Florida high school teacher reported she is no longer outraged by student cheating. She has learned to live with it because everyone does it (McDivitt, 1990).

Plagiarism in scholarly writing continued generally unchallenged. Only recently has one organization, the American Historical Association, taken steps to disclose the names of those who plagiarize or are otherwise in serious violation of professional ethics (Nissenbaum, 1990).

Yet the 1980's also saw a renewed emphasis on proper ethical behavior. Although Congress did not totally confront the ethics issue, charges of unethical behavior were used to deny John Tower an appointment as Secretary of Defense. A special congressional ethics committee raised questions about the behavior of House Speaker Jim Wright, forcing his resignation.

Activity also focused on ethics outside government in the private sector. This emphasis included the following:

* The establishment of an ethics institute at Dartmouth College and an ethics resource center in Washington, D.C.

* The first major overhaul of the RTNDA Code of Ethics in 25 years.

* The distribution of an ASNE "Ethics audit" questionnaire to editors of daily newspapers with the suggestion that they might want to use it as a basis for productive ethics discussions.

* Numerous conferences and symposia on ethics in business and in the media, including one at Notre Dame during which John Phelan, chairman of the New York Stock Exchange, condemned the lack of ethics in business and stressed the need for decency, honesty, and trust, and a strict set of standards for the investment community.

* A renewed interest in the establishment of ethics-related programs, the production of ethics films and videos, and in funding ethics research, especially by the Gannett Center for Media Studies at Columbia University, the General Electric Foundation, and Harvard University.

* An increase in media ethics courses in departments of journalism and mass communication on university campuses. One study found a 73% increase in the number of media ethics courses offered between 1977 and 1984.

* Publication of at least 27 new books devoted explicitly to media ethics, and dozens of books, dissertations, and scholarly articles in speech communication on ethics. The Silha Center published an important bibliography on media ethics.

*WEEI (AM), a Boston CBS affiliate, began a regularly scheduled program examining ethics.

*The Poynter Institute for Media Studies continued to offer important seminars in print and broadcast ethics.

*Western Michigan University, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, and Asuza Pacific University each planned early 1990 conferences on ethical issues in media and in communication.[1]

But as Cooper (1988) notes, this growing interest in ethics has not manifested itself in the ethical analysis of media, especially television. Cooper suggests a need for more documented research and less "homespun commentary about television as perceived good and evil" (p. 451).

It is the purpose of this study to address one of the concerns raised by Cooper. Specifically, this study suggests one answer to Cooper's question: "Which ethical systems does TV convey?"

Presumably, television conveys many different ethical systems, depending on variables such as program type, program content, target audience, and the like. It is doubtful that a single study could provide an explanation of all the ethical systems presented. However, a series of studies might be undertaken, systematically examining specific ethical behaviors in different program genres. Such studies would provide a basis for examining possible effects resulting from exposure to particular ethical systems via particular program genres.

Since little has been done in this area, one might reasonably begin with the ethical basics, i.e., issues of right and wrong, good and evil, truth and falsehood. For this study, it was decided that one ethical issue--lying--would be studied in one program genre--situation comedies. Recent articles in news magazines (U. S. News and World Report, Newsweek) management journals (Broadcast Financial Journal) and in other popular publications (USA Today, Psychology Today, The Saturday Evening Post, New Age Journal) examined the practice of lying in American society and concluded that it is widespread.[2]

The scholarly literature is rich with studies on lying (Camden, Motley, & Wilson, 1984; Knapp & Comadena, 1979; Ford, King, & Hollender, 1988; McPhail, 1980; Turner, Edgley, & Olmstead, 1975; Hample, 1980; Zuckerman, at al., 1982a; Wimmer, Gruber, & Perner, 1985; Jones, 1986; Zuckerman, et al., 1982b; Dulaney, 1982). These studies examine a wide range of issues, from children's conception of lying to nonverbal strategies for decoding deception.

Lippard's (1988) study of interpersonal deception seems to put the issue of lying into a useful perspective: "Deception is frequently judged the right thing to do." Lippard found lies constituted more than 81% of the deceptive acts individuals are involved in. Slosser (1986) suggests "lying comes almost as easily as the truth. Lying doesn't hurt any longer" (p. 36). Ford et al., (1988) note the most obvious motivation for lying is the desire to influence others, to have an impact on one's environment. However, lying may often occur when no useful purpose is being served.

The most influential work on lying is probably Sissela Bok's (1978) Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life. Bok suggests we have all been poorly served by the idea that it is acceptable to lie for good reasons. Lying is often used to ease the stress of ordinary life, but Bok quickly passes along Kant's notion that "truthfulness is a duty which no circumstances abrogate" (p. 41).

One other aspect of lying is worth noting. Ford et al., (1988) found that "the ubiquity of lying and other forms of deception suggests that they have 'normal' aspects" (p. 554). However, Ford and his colleagues further note that the psychological impact of lying can be harmful, both to the liar and to the recipient of the lie. Moustakas (cited in Ford, p. 560) feels that "lying inevitably deters authentic growth and development of the real self." Hall

(1988) lists five negative consequences of lying: the breakdown of community; the breakdown of central values and absolutes; loss of the other person's freedom to act freely on the truth; erosion of character and integrity; and the breaking of the Ninth Commandment.

The sociological and psychological literature on lying is extensive. In mass communication, a few studies exist on journalistic lies of one sort or another, but lying has not been studied in a broadcast program context. This study examines lying behavior in a popular prime time television program genre: the situation comedy.

Specifically, the study's objectives are to:

1. Describe the lying behavior in a sample of situation comedies from the 1989-90 season.
2. Determine the ethical principles such behavior advocates.

Situation comedies, or sitcoms as they are commonly called, were selected for study primarily because they have been a mainstay of television programming since the 1950's (Marc, 1989). Each week, continuing sitcom characters struggle with events in their lives and react to these events in idiosyncratic, humorous ways. These characters are usually presented as friendly, sympathetic, likeable people who are entangled in life's snares. Friendship seems to be a key ingredient in the glue that holds many of these programs together. A character (and a viewer) can overlook the extreme, often illogical, behavior of another because such acceptance is a natural part of friendship.

Examples of friendship in the situation comedy abound: Ralph Kramden and Ed Norton, Lucy Ricardo and Ethel Mertz, Gilligan and the Skipper, Andy Taylor and Barney Fife, Sergeant Carter and Gomer Pyle, Richie Cunningham and the Fonz, Kate and Allie. These characters find themselves in situations that Miller (1987) calls "improbable, but somehow credible . . . physical humor, slapstick, mistaken identities, coincidence, inopportune meetings, or pure fantasy" (p. 129).

The characters' interpersonal relationship enables them to endure the action, no matter how bizarre it might get. Each problem or conflict is usually resolved at the end of the half hour, and the audience is left feeling comfortable with the characters as human beings (Mintz, 1985).

We already know a great deal about lying in interpersonal relationships. We know, for example, that people lie a lot (Camden et al., 1984), and that individuals lie primarily to casual friends or acquaintances for the main purpose of avoiding conflict (Lippard, 1988). Also, individuals lie to close friends and consider the protection of others as an important justification for this deception (Lippard, 1988). Lies are often told to increase/decrease social interaction (Camden et al., 1984).

However, one might argue that lying behavior in television sitcoms would be somewhat different. Television programs are not generally thought to (or intended to) mirror real life. Script writers can use lies to move a plot. Yet the sitcom is a unique program type and lying probably goes beyond simple technical use.

Gerbner (cited in London, 1987), noting that television is the most pervasive medium we have, feels that most people consider what they see on television as the norm, as the standard. If true, it is important to examine program content to discover what ethical principles are being presented.

Cooper (1988) correctly notes that much of the work in media ethics is directed toward journalism ethics or embedded in studies of media effects. Perhaps the issue of ethics should be explored from a slightly different perspective, emphasizing the ethical nature of program content, i.e., the ethical message presented, rather than the effects of a message. Before we can fully understand effects, we need to know what a particular program is advocating. Cooper (1988) suggests as much in noting that "research has concentrated more upon television effects ... and television values, than upon the ethics of television programming" (p. 451).

Therefore, the following hypotheses are posed:

Hypothesis 1 = The major characters in a sitcom account for the greatest proportion of lies told.

Hypothesis 2 = The majority of lies told in sitcoms will be between individuals who are close friends.

Hypothesis 3A = The principal motivation for telling lies will be conflict avoidance.

Hypothesis 3B = The principal motivation for telling lies will be protection of others.

Hypothesis 4 = Lies told in sitcoms will be primarily part of the action in an episode's main plot.

Hypothesis 5 = Lying behavior in sitcoms suggests characters demonstrate interpersonally normative morality in solving problems and addressing moral dilemmas.

METHOD

Network prime-time program schedules for the 1989-90 season were examined and 36 situation comedies were identified. A sample of nine programs, or one-fourth the total schedule, was decided upon. In order to insure that each network was represented in the sample in proportion to its representation in the population, each of the 36 was assigned to its network. ABC and NBC had 14 sitcoms each (39% respectively), CBS had 6 (17%), and Fox had 2 (5%). Rounding in figuring network percentage share of the sample increased the sample size to 11.

Using a systematic random selection procedure, *Roseanne*, *Growing Pains*, *Family Matters*, and *Mr. Belvedere* were selected from ABC; *Alf*, *Night Court*, *Dear John*, and *Empty Nest* were selected from NBC; CBS programs landing in the sample were *The Famous Teddy Z* and *Newhart*; *Open House* was selected from Fox. Eight of the programs were continuing series; three were new for the 1989-90 season.

A programming frame of ten weeks--October 1 to December 9, 1989--was established. Using a random selection procedure, four episodes of each of the 11 programs were selected to form a composite month for each program. This yielded a total of 44 half-hour episodes.

Trained judges coded each lie found in the program material using the Primary Motivation Category system developed by Lippard (1988). A lie was defined as any intentionally deceptive message which is stated and for which visual and/or cognitive evidence of deception is present. Judges were asked to specify the evidence present that indicated the spoken communication was a lie. Once identified, each lie was analyzed for: 1) gender of teller and recipient; 2) character role of teller and recipient; 3) relationship of teller to recipient; 4) primary motivation for the lie; and 5) whether lie was told as part of the action in the main or a secondary plot. Judges were 30 students in an undergraduate research methods course. Judges were trained in two 2-hour sessions where sample programs were coded and the coding form explained, discussed, and revised. Working in pairs, judges viewed four episodes. Episodes were coded as they were sampled. No more than two episodes of the same program appeared in any coding set. Some coding sets contained four different programs. Twenty percent of the sample was independently recoded for reliability. The intercoder reliability coefficient, computed using Holsti's (1969) method, was .87.

Judges were encouraged to stop, rewind, and replay the tape as necessary in order to determine whether a lie was being told. Judges were able to identify lies easily because of a technique known as dramatic irony. This technique, used extensively in literature and in the theatre, enables the audience to understand the implication and meaning of a situation, or what is being said, even when the characters do not. Judges were able to isolate lies because, as viewers, they knew much more about the motivations and actions of the characters in the situation comedies than the characters themselves did.

Insert Table 1 about here

RESULTS

A total of 153 lies were identified and coded in the 44 sitcom episodes. Table 1 shows the number of lies told in a composite month of programming and each program's percentage share of the total. The mean number of lies per program composite month was 13.9 (standard deviation=10.54). This translates to a mean of 3.5 lies per episode. Mean number of lies for new series was 10.3 per month, for continuing series 15.3.

Given the dominance of continuing, major characters in television programming, one might be inclined to accept Hypothesis 1 á priori. Nevertheless, results show 91 lies were told by major characters to other major characters and 52 were told by major characters to minor characters. Together, major characters accounted for 93% of all lies told. Minor characters initiated lies only 10 times (7%), Hypothesis 1 is supported.

The second hypothesis addressed the relationship between individuals who are involved in a lie, postulating the primary relationship as close friend. Results indicate 22% of the lies involved individuals who were close friends. A smaller number of lies (16%) were told to strangers and to casual friends/acquaintances (12%). This finding is significantly different from what we know from previous research ($X^2=97.21$, df=7, $\underline{p}<.0001$). The data support Hypothesis 2.

Insert Table 2 about here

Table 2 reports results on the motivation variable. In keeping with the notion of friendship as a key sitcom element, Hypothesis 3A postulates "conflict avoidance" and Hypothesis 3B postulates "protection of other" as primary motivations for lying. Although friendship encompasses more than these two motives, they are the only ones in the taxonomy which can be comfortably placed in a definition of friendship. Avoiding disharmony, preventing hurt feelings, and alleviating worry are certainly part of what friendship is about.

Results indicate 18% of the lies were told to avoid conflict, and only 5% were told to protect others. More than one-third of the lies (39%) were motivated by self-protection. This raises an interesting question. If one lies primarily to close friends, why would one be motivated by self protection? Given that close friends are generally more open and honest, i.e., more intimate, with each other than they are with, say, strangers, to whom one might easily lie for self protection, why would one need to protect oneself from close friends? Nevertheless, the data are convincing and do not support either Hypothesis 3A or 3B.

One might also be inclined to accept Hypothesis 4 á priori, especially in view of the ability of a lie to sustain a simple sitcom plot for half an hour. One hundred ten lies (72%) were told as part of action in sitcom main plots, 43 (28%) as part of various sub-plots. Hypothesis 4 is supported.

Hypothesis 5 asserts that sitcom characters are using interpersonally normative morality in ethical decision-making. The key variable in addressing this hypothesis is motivation, i.e., why a particular lie was told. Kohlberg (1986) defines interpersonally normative morality as a stage of moral development where "the separate perspectives of individuals are coordinated into . . . that of mutually trusting relationships among people" (p. 493). It emphasizes being a good, pro-social person, primarily concerned with maintaining trust and social approval, and caring for others. This follows the friendship rationale upon which the study's other hypotheses are based.

Fifty-nine lies were motivated by the desire for self-protection. Nineteen lies were told to gain or protect material resources. Nineteen more were told to manipulate another person's behavior or to induce feelings of guilt. Together, they comprise 63% of all lies told in the sitcom sample. These three motivations appear to have little to do with friendship and much to do with one's self-interest. Lies backed by these motives do not reflect Kohlberg's interpersonally normative morality. Hypothesis 5 is rejected.

These motivations do, however, fit Kohlberg's second stage of moral development: individualistic morality, described as pragmatic and intended "to maximize satisfaction of one's needs and desires while minimizing negative consequences to the self" (p. 492). Some philosophers have called this value system "ethical egoism." Rachels (1986) describes ethical egoism as "the idea that each person ought to pursue his or her own self-interest exclusively" (p. 66). In other words, our only moral duty is to do what is best for ourselves. Ethical egoism does not prohibit helping others; it simply stresses that self comes first and if others are helped along the way, so be it. Clearly, the philosophy being advocated by the lying in sitcoms is not one of concern for others, but of concern for self.

DISCUSSION

The significance of this study rests primarily in the fact that individuals learn from and often imitate behaviors they see on television. It is not the purpose of the present study to suggest a direct stimulus-response relationship between media content and audience behavior. But few would suggest that no relationship exists between media content and behavior.

The issue of mass media effects has become more complicated as both media content and audiences have grown more diverse. As Jeffres (1986) notes, "media are not all powerful, but neither does the evidence suggest that audiences have defensive filters to wash out all media effects" (p. 24). The impact of television on human behavior, congition, and attitudes has been well-documented (Cooper, 1988). DeFleur and Ball-Rokeach (1989) derive what they call "modeling theory" from the social learning work of Bandura (1977) and others, suggesting "the actors who portray real people in visual or auditory media . . . can serve as models for others to imitate" (p. 213).

In terms of lying behavior, the model presented in situation comedies is neither altruistic nor malevolent. "No one doubts that each of us cares very much about his own welfare. But we also believe that we care about others as well..."(Rachels, p. 54). The study results contradict our usual conception of ourselves as individuals concerned about others. Only eight lies (5%) were told to protect others. Adding lies in the conflict avoidance category helps, bringing the number that might be told to benefit others to 23 (35%). Still, self-interest predominates. Lying sitcom characters are not good examples of conscientious moral agents. A conscientious moral agent, among other things, is one "who is concerned impartially with the interests of everyone affected by what he or she does..."(Rachels, p. 11). Little concern for others is seen in the lying behavior of sitcom characters in the sample.

It might be helpful to place the study results in some more familiar theoretical contexts. Viewed from the perspective of Kant's Categorical Imperative, the results suggest a model of behavior that would surely be socially destructive. It is hard to conceive how self-interest, universally applied, could have positive outcomes.

From a utilitarian perspective, the self-interest lying practice of sitcom characters does not fare better. It seems devoted to rendering the greatest benefit to oneself, not to promoting the greatest amount of happiness for all those affected. Situation ethics cannot be advanced to support sitcom lying behavior. "For the situationist, what makes the lie right is its loving purpose" (Fletcher, 1966, p. 65). Fletcher's love is agapé--pure, unrestricted, unconditional Christian love. This implies serious, religious concern for others. No such concern is evident in the lying behavior examined in the sitcom sample. The data would require one to argue that the most loving thing to do in most situations is to act from a self-interest perspective. Situation ethics cannot be used to support this argument.

If, as Miller (1987) suggests, "sitcoms in any period do eventually reflect some of the new popular values of their times" (p. 127), it would appear that we are drifting toward a renewed emphasis on the needs and desires of the individual. Bryant (1979) feels the sitcom is a subtle mode of socialization, calling for a balance between needs of family, friends, and associates. One risks upsetting this balance when one pursues his/her own set of values, emphasizing personal over group needs. In terms of the lying behavior in situation comedies, the balance, if not completely upset, is at least significantly tilted.

The study results are cause for some concern. "Lying has been, still is, and always will be...an important form of behavior which permits [one] to adapt to society [and] the world of nature ... (Ludwig, 1965, p. 217). Nevertheless, beyond the social and biological adaptive uses, other forms of lying are potentially harmful. One could argue that much of the trouble Ivan Boesky, Jim and Tammy Bakker, Jimmy Swaggart, Janet Cooke, and the others found themselves in was a result of ethical egoism--acting largely from their various self-interest perspectives.

Additional research is needed. Sitcom characters are demonstrating a type of ethical egoism in their lying behavior. Ethical egoism does not repudiate morality, though it does indicate a certain lack of maturity. Humans are not isolated, self-sufficient individuals. We must live in a world where economic, social, and political forces present us with a variety of moral decisions daily. Self-interest most assuredly will conflict with some of these forces. A mature approach would recognize the necessity and practicality of not acting primarily from self-interest but of affecting some sort of comfortable compromise.

Lying behavior must be studied in a broader context. Research should go beyond motivation and examine the consequences of lying as well as the effects lying has on self and others. As Ludwig (1965) observes, "there are times and places for both lying and truthfulness and since it would prove futile to expect man to give up lying, we at least might expect him to use the lie in more intelligent, judicious, and profitable ways both for himself and others" (p. 232).

NOTES

[1] Listing compiled from a variety of brochures, newsletters, and correspondence items, including the following: *The Observer*, University of Notre Dame; *Media Ethics Update* 1(2), Fall 1988, Emerson College, Boston; *Ethics Resource Center Report* 4(1), Spring 1988, Washington, DC; Christians, C., "Media ethics courses have increased since 1977," *Journalism Educator*, Summer 1985, pp. 17,19,51; Marks, J. A., Chair, RTNDA Ethics and Standards Committee, in letter to educators, January 1988; Stinnett, L., Executive Director, ASNE, in letter to journalism school deans, February 10, 1988; Christians, C., and Jensen, V., *Two Bibliographies on Ethics*, Silha Center, University of Minnesota, 1988; and *Media Ethics Update* 2(2), Fall 1989, Emerson College, Boston.

[2] "A nation of liars?" *U. S. News and World Report*, February 23, 1987, pp. 54-61; also, *Newsweek*, April 28, 1986, p. 79; *Broadcast Financial Journal*, September/October 1988; *USA Today*, December 1987, p. 3; *Psychology Today*, January 1986, p. 12; *Saturday Evening Post*, September 1986, pp. 36-37; *New Age Journal*, March/April 1987, pp. 42-47.

Table 1
Lying Frequency in Sitcoms

Program	Lies in Composite Month	Percent of Total
Growing Pains (ABC)	2	01
Roseanne (ABC)	3	02
Dear John (NBC)	4	03
Newhart (CBS)	5	03
Teddy Z (CBS)	10	07
Night Court (NBC)	14	09
Empty Nest (NBC)	15	10
Open House (Fox)	16	10
Family Matters (ABC)	22	14
Alf (NBC)	30	20
Mr. Belvedere (ABC)	32	21

Table 2
Primary Motivation Categories

	Frequency	Percent
1. RESOURCES. Deception used to gain or protect material resources, money, property, food, information.	19	12
2. AFFILIATION. Deception used to increase or decrease interaction with another.	07	05
3. SELF-PROTECTION. Deception used to protect or enhance one's social image; or used to avoid undesired self-disclosure.	59	39
4. CONFLICT AVOIDANCE. Deception used to avoid conflict with another; can appear in an attempt to avoid disharmony, retaliation.	27	18
5. PROTECTION OF OTHER. Deception used to avoid hurting another's feelings; also to prevent another from worrying about someone else; may be used to benefit a third party.	08	05
6. MANIPULATION OF OTHER. Deception used to evoke guilt or other desired feeling in recipient, or to control other's behavior, causing recipient to behave in a desired manner.	19	12
7. OBLIGATION/EXCUSE. Deception used to explain subject's failure or intended failure to meet an obligation and, thus, be excused from expected consequences.	06	04
8. JOKE. Deception used to trick another for the purpose of humor.	08	05

REFERENCES

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Bok, S. (1978). *Lying: Moral choice in public and private life*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Bryant, J. (1979). Emma, Lucy, and the American situation comedy of manners. *Journal of Popular Culture*, *13*(2), 248-256.

Camden, C., Motley, M. T., & Wilson, A. (1984). White lies in interpersonal communication: A taxonomy and preliminary investigation of social motivations. *Western Journal of Speech Communication*, *48*(4), 309-325.

Cooper, T. W. (1988). Ethics, journalism and television: Bibliographic constellations, black holes. *Journalism Quarterly*, *65*(2), 450-455, 496.

DeFleur, M. & Ball-Rokeach, S. (1989). *Theories of mass communication*. New York: Longman.

Dulaney, E. F., Jr., (1982). Changes in language behavior as a function of veracity. *Human Communication Research*, *9*(1), 75-82.

Fletcher, J. (1966). *Situation ethics*. Philadelphia: Westminister Press.

Ford, C. W., King, B. H., & Hallender, M. H. (1988). Lies and liars: Psychiatric aspects of prevarication. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, *145*, 554-562.

Hall, G. B. (1988, September/October). Lying. Broadcast Financial Journal, 31-33.

Hample, D. (1980). Purposes and effects of lying. Southern Speech Communication Journal, 46, 33-47.

Harris, C. (1989, March). Note sales banned as professors protest. U. The National College Newspaper, 2, pp. 1, 23.

Holsti, O. R. (1969). Content analysis for the social sciences and humanities. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Jeffres, L. W. (1986). Mass media: Processes and effects. Prospect Heights, IL: Waveland Press.

Jones, G. E. (1986). Lying and intentions. Journal of Business Ethics, 5, 347-349.

Knapp, M. L., & Comadena, M. E. (1979). Telling it like it isn't: A review of theory and research on deceptive communication. Human Communication Research, 5(3), 270-285.

Kohlberg, L. (1986). A current statement on some theoretical issues. In S. Modgil & C. Modgil (Eds.), Lawrence Kohlberg: Consensus and Controversy (pp. 485-546). Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Lippard, P. (1988). Ask me no questions, I'll tell you no lies: Situational exigencies for interpersonal deception. Western Journal of Speech Communication, 52, 91-103.

London, H. (1987, August 23). What TV drama is teaching our children. New York Times, pp. 23, 30.

Ludwig, A. M. (1965). The Importance of Lying. Springfield, IL: Charles C. Thomas.

McDivitt, B. (1990, March 18). Student cheating becoming name of '90s game. St. Petersburg Times, p. B2

McPhail, P. (1980). The morality of communication: Authority and method in situational morality. International Review of Education, 26, 135-152.

Marc, D. (1989). Comic Visions: Television Comedy and American Culture. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

Miller, M. J. (1987). Turn Up the Contrast. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Mintz, L. (1985). Situation comedy. In B. G. Rose (Ed.), TV Genres (pp. 107-129). Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Nissenbaum, S. (1990, March 28). The plagiarists in academe must face formal sanctions. The Chronicle of Higher Education, p. A52.

Rachels, J. (1986). Elements of Moral Philosophy. New York: Random House.

Resume Fraud. (1989, August). Manage, pp. 21, 25, 29.

Slosser, B. (1986, September). The honest truth about lying. Saturday Evening Post. pp. 36-37.

Tillman, D. (1989, October). Nationwide study reveals more freshmen cheating. U. The National College Newspaper, p. 1.

Turner, R. E., Edgley, C., & Olmstead, G. (1975). Information control in conversations: Honesty is not always the best policy. Kansas Journal of Sociology, 11, 69-89.

Wimmer, H., Gruber, S., & Perner, J. (1985). Young children's conception of lying: Moral intuition and the denotation and connotation of 'to lie'. Developmental Psychology, 21(6), 993-995.

Zuckerman, M., Spiegel, N. H., DePaulo, B. M., & Rosenthal, R. (1982a). Nonverbal strategies for decoding deception. Journal of Nonverbal Behavior, 6(3), 171-187.

Zuckerman, M., Amidon, M. D., Bishop, S. E., & Pomerantz, S. D. (1982b). Face and tone of voice in the communication of deception. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 43(2), 347-357.

JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF NEWS SELECTION IN LOCAL TELEVISION:

A Q-METHODOLOGY STUDY

Dan Berkowitz
Assistant Professor

School of Journalism and Mass Communication
University of Iowa
Iowa City, Iowa 52242
(319) 335-5821

Bitnet: Blabrkwy@uiamvs

Paper presented to the Radio-TV Journalism Division of AEJMC for the 1991 annual convention, Boston, MA

JOURNALISTS' PERCEPTIONS OF NEWS SELECTION IN LOCAL TELEVISION: A Q-METHODOLOGY STUDY

The research debate about news selection in local television has followed three main themes. One theme concerns the differences in work roles between information gatherers (reporters and anchors) and news managers (producers, editors, news directors). A second concerns the quality of television news, and how that quality is influenced by the news or entertainment orientations of television journalists. A third theme considers the impact of newswork, including the role of the media organization and the work processes it necessitates.

The purpose of this study is to explore how local television journalists view news selection, and how differences in perspectives might be linked to work roles or personal backgrounds. Data come from a mail survey of local television journalists in Iowa, with analysis based on Q-methodology.

Background

As news increasingly has become a profit center for local television stations, the work of television journalists as well as the content they produce has changed (Becker, 1982; Smith & Becker, 1989). Many studies have examined the impact of the close ties between journalism and business on content (Berkowitz, 1990; Carroll, 1989). Another concern is for a change in news orientation as work roles have become more specialized (Smith & Becker, 1989). Assignment editors and producers work as news managers, the people who decide which stories will be covered and how those stories will be packaged into a newscast. News directors, who once doubled as news anchors and reporters, have largely moved away from everyday journalism to become business managers in charge of news operation profitability (Dracos, 1989; Schultz, 1990). News managers also assign reporters to specific stories; as a result, the role of the television reporter has become mainly that of an information gatherer. These work roles likely influence how local TV news journalists perceive their work.

Support for the effects of this differentiation between news managers and information gatherers has been mixed, however. In particular, local television news has been described as an assembly line process (Bantz, McCorkle, & Baade, 1980), where news managers use live reporting capabilities to showcase a station's capabilities (Butters, 1990), and where reporters take a back seat in selection decisions (Berkowitz, 1990). Further, news managers and information gatherers have shown differences in how they would respond to some news situations (Smith & Becker, 1989).

Other evidence, however, has refuted these criticisms and distinctions. Most broadly, content values in local television news have been found to closely parallel traditional journalistic values (Carroll, 1985; Wulfemeyer, 1982), which suggests that even if role perceptions are different, the product of television journalists is not unduly influenced by those values.

More specifically, television journalists have relatively similar background characteristics to newspaper journalists (Weaver, Drew, & Wilhoit, 1986). The news values by which they choose stories also represent a traditional journalistic orientation, again negating the argument that work roles have reshaped the character of TV news (Harmon, 1989). Further, news gatherers and news managers have responded similarly to some news scenarios and expressed similar attitudes about the reporting process, suggesting that in thought, if not in deed, the two groups are not that far apart (Smith & Becker, 1989).

Regardless of work roles, the media organization has a direct impact on journalistic activities. TV journalists often are caught in a bind between journalism, entertainment, and business (Bantz, 1985; Epstein, 1973), a bind that increases as the ownership stakes become higher (Carroll, 1989; Shoemaker & Mayfield, 1987). The format of a newscast, the constraints on resources, and the technology that is available shapes television news nearly as much as the selection decisions that journalists make (Berkowitz, in press; Epstein, 1973). Journalists, however, are not particularly cognizant of these influences, but instead take them as the normal state of affairs in the battle for maintaining journalistic integrity (Tuchman, 1978).

Individual-level examinations of the journalistic work process have suggested that journalists develop cognitive strategies for accomplishing work based on typifications of how news stories should go. Both reporting and selection are thus shaped by journalists' cognitive templates (Gitlin, 1980; Stocking & Gross, 1989; Tuchman, 1978). Another strategy is reliance on story ideas proposed by news sources, what has been called "information subsidy" (Gandy, 1982). Television news, with its greater equipment constraints, fixed newshole, and greater personnel requirements, is more likely than newspapers to rely on subsidized information for story ideas (Dunwoody, 1978; Epstein, 1973).

This discussion has suggested that as local news has become a profit center for media organizations, work roles and journalistic orientations have been split further apart. In particular, news managers will likely be less concerned about journalistic standards than information gatherers, but more concerned about business-related elements of newswork. The evidence so far has been mixed, however, so that other factors could possibly account for differences in news selection orientation. Two research questions follow:

RQ_1: What kinds of orientations toward news selection exist among local television journalists?

RQ_2: What personal characteristics distinguish among those orientations?

Method

Data were collected through a mail survey of television journalists in Iowa. Because identifying orientation types was the focus of this study, Q-methodology was chosen for data analysis. That decision shaped both the sampling scheme and data collection. Typically, Q-methodology has provided respondents with a set of cards, each with a statement concerning a concept under study. Respondents are then asked to sort cards into piles according to whether they agree or disagree with an item, or have no strong feelings about an item (Brown, 1980; McKeown & Thomas, 1988). That approach, however, is cumbersome, time-consuming, and unfamiliar to most people. As a result, it is nearly impossible to implement in a mail survey.

This study used a survey questionnaire to achieve the intent of a card sort, while avoiding the logistical problems. Forty Likert-scale items (on a -5 to +5 scale) were therefore used to tap eight concepts that were described in this paper's background section:

1. traditional news values, such as timeliness or proximity
2. the news/entertainment dialectic
3. the newscast format
4. competition among stations
5. typification
6. constraints on resources
7. information subsidy
8. television technology

There were also six demographic items (job title, years of experience, sex, journalism degree, age, membership in a professional organization), and three items about a respondent's career (future plans, job satisfaction, perceived news quality at the respondent's station). An open-ended item allowed respondents to provide other thoughts about news selection. Media market size (medium or small) was determined from Broadcasting Yearbook and added to the data set.

Sampling Scheme

An important implication of Q-methodology is that large sample sizes are less important, because a factor (or "prototype") can be represented by only a few people (Brown, 1980). Q-methodology also does not rely on statistical tests of association or difference, so again large sample sizes are not needed for the assumptions of statistical procedures. Generalizability or transferability are nonetheless bounded by the population from which the sample has been drawn, by the characteristics of the sample itself (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), by the sample of survey items that are used, and by the conditions of instruction (Brown, 1980).

The sampling scheme for this study used a multi-stage design. First, Broadcasting Yearbook was reviewed and 12 television stations were identified within Iowa that had local news departments. Eleven of the 12 news directors were asked to provide a list of all reporters, anchors, producers, editors, news directors, and other people at the station in a journalistic capacity. All 11 complied with the request.

At the twelfth television station, the researcher distributed the questionnaire to six journalists in person. This was done before other questionnaires were mailed and served as a pretest. Interviews were conducted with each journalist afterward to detect possible problems. No serious problems were detected, so the same questionnaire was used for the mail survey.

The survey sample was stratified by two dimensions. First, staff lists were separated into medium (sizes 66, 78, and 81) and small (sizes 138 and 149) media markets. There are no large media markets in Iowa. Then journalists on the staff lists were divided into information gatherers (reporters and anchors), and news managers (producers, editors, news directors). If a person worked in both roles, he or she was classified as a news manager, because experience in that role was expected to change a person's journalistic orientation more toward business. Using systematic random sampling, 60 journalists were chosen from the 11 staff lists (41 from medium markets and 19 from small markets). There were 30 news managers and 30 news gatherers.

Respondents were first sent a postcard informing them that they would shortly be receiving a questionnaire, and asking for their cooperation. Three days later, they were sent a personalized letter along with the questionnaire and a stamped-return envelope. As an incentive, the questionnaire included a box at the end where the respondent could request a copy of a study summary.

The questionnaire was followed by a reminder postcard if a respondent had not returned the questionnaire within one week. After another week, a second questionnaire, return envelope, and cover letter were sent to all who had not responded. In all, 43 journalists (71.7%) responded to the mail survey, and 36 asked for a research report (76.6%). Combined with the six questionnaires administered at the twelfth station, there were 47 usable questionnaires. (One person returned a blank questionnaire and another sent a letter expressing a concern that academics only use research to "bash the industry.")

The 47 journalists were evenly split between news gatherers (n=24) and news managers (n=23). Thirty-four were from medium markets, and 13 from small markets. These figures correspond closely to the stratification in the sample that was originally drawn.

Data Analysis

Data analysis began by using the QUANAL statistics package to produce one-, two-, and three-factor solutions that could identify possible orientation patterns. Q-methodology analyzes data through a factor analysis scheme that identifies patterns of responses, rather than average responses (Brown, 1980). Although factor analysis typically looks for commonalities among variables (called R-factor analysis), Q-factor analysis looks for commonalities among people. Rather than placing respondents into predetermined groups and comparing means, Q-methodology allows grouping to occur naturalistically from a person's pattern of item scores.

Stephenson suggests loadings of .40 or greater as a breaking point for interpretation purposes (see for example, Stephenson, 1972). In the one-factor solution, 46 of the TV journalists exceeded this threshold and the forty-seventh loaded at .36. Approximately 40% of the variance was accounted for by this factor. This suggests that all respondents, regardless of their organizational roles or other personal characteristics, expressed relatively similar views about news selection. Table 1 presents the items of greatest agreement or disagreement, in standard Z-scores. A positive score indicates agreement with an item, while a negative score indicates disagreement. Fourteen of the 40 questionnaire items averaged at least one standard score above or below the mean.

Table 1 about here

An attempt at a two-factor solution found that little additional distinction was provided, so those results are not presented here. A three-factor solution, however, did differentiate among the respondents. Using the .40 factor loading guideline once again, 25 of the 47 journalists were assigned to one of the three factors and the Z-score data was recomputed based on factor loading weights for each person within a factor. This helped sharpen the distinctions among the three factors by considering only those people who most closely represented the perceptions of a particular sub-type. In this situation, the three factors basically represent three variations or subtypes of the single pattern identified in the one-factor solution which involved all but one participant.

Table 2 about here

To assess the degree to which the three-factor solution separated respondents, the three arrays of factor Z-scores were correlated across the set of questionnaire items. Also included was the factor array for the main type. This information appears in Table 2. Sub-type 1 correlated highly with the Main-type responses from the one factor solution, and will therefore not be discussed as a unique pattern. Sub-type 2 and Sub-type 3 had lower correlations with the Main type, and correlated even less with Sub-type 1. Also, they correlated only moderately with each other. In all, Table 2 suggests that these variations from the main prototype may provide helpful information about more subtle variation in news selection perceptions.

Table 3 about here

Table 3 presents a summary of those questionnaire items where Sub-type 2 journalists' responses were at least one standard deviation from the other two sub-types. Again, a positive Z-score indicates agreement with an item. The difference was also calculated for the group with the closest item Z-score. Seven items from Sub-type 2 had differences of at least one standard deviation.

Table 4 about here

Items distinguishing Sub-type 3 from the other sub-types are presented in Table 4. Four items exceeded a difference of at least one standard deviation.

Table 5 about here

Table 5 presents some of the key background characteristics that distinguished Sub-types 2 and 3 from the overall sample. It is important to keep in mind that the sizes of these two groups are small, so that differences should be viewed cautiously. Because of those small sizes, background distinctions were interpreted by inspection rather than by statistical tests. Only three of the ten background measures showed meaningful differences among the three groups. These included whether a person had a journalism degree, the station's market size, and years of television news experience (likely related to market size). Work roles were not meaningfully different among the groups.

Discussion

Unlike what had been expected, there did not seem to be a clear distinction between news managers and information gatherers, because all respondents are represented in the one-factor solution. The items with the greatest agreement and disagreement (shown in Table 1) provide an interesting profile of news selection orientation. Overall, the journalists expressed a belief that news should be selected according to what is important and that business considerations should not play an important role in changing those decisions. At the same time, they acknowledged that the medium had made TV news somewhat different than the news in newspapers.

More specifically, several top items of greatest agreement showed that newsworthiness judgments were important considerations (3, 14, 17, 23, 30, 38). Interestingly, four of the six items concerned journalistic norms (using the word "should") rather than descriptions of actual practices.

Concerns about TV technology were highlighted by three other top items (24, 27, 32). On one hand, journalists thought that TV technology has changed the kinds of stories that appear in local news. On the other hand, they disagreed with the statement that stories were selected merely to showcase new technology (24). This likely means that technology has changed work practices, but those changes have been more for logistical reasons than for the sake of technology alone.

Other items focused on the business of TV news. Two descriptive items (11, 31) found journalists disagreeing that programming of a newscast's format meaningfully impacted news selection. Three other descriptive statements suggested that the journalists saw news selection as independent of financial influences (9, 22, 37).

It is also important to consider those items where journalists had either little consensus or no strong opinions. These items are represented by Z-scores in the midrange around zero. Two news selection concepts stood out here. The first was information subsidy, where all five of that concept's items had a Z-score of less than the 1.0 guideline, with absolute values ranging from .02 to .92. When considering questionnaire items such as the following, then, the journalists held mixed views:

20. A good proportion of my station's stories originate through news releases we have received.

39. If an organization holds a news conference, the story will generally be covered.

The second concept with consistently low Z-scores was typification, where absolute values of scores ranged from .00 to .54. It is less clear here which explanation--weak feelings or lack of consensus--fits best. On one hand, typification is difficult to operationalize. At the same time, responses to items for this concept would likely be mixed, as they were for information subsidy. Example items include:

15. A common way of evaluating possible stories for selection is to compare them with other stories from the past.

35. News stories are often compared to other stories about familiar kinds of people or events to simplify the story selection process.

Variations of the Main Pattern

Despite the relative consistency of responses to the 40 questionnaire items, the three-factor solution suggests two interesting variations. (The first factor, Sub-type 1, was very similar to the main pattern and will not be discussed here.)

Sub-type 2 contains people more aware of news programming (see Table 3). Items 11, 18, and 31 express concerns about the impact of a newscast's format. These items were descriptive rather than normative, that is, how they thought news selection takes place. Three other items (10, 17, 30) disagreed more strongly that news should be selected in order to attract an audience.

Although the size of this sub-type was small (n=6), cautious interpretation of background information helps distinguish these journalists from the others (Table 5). Sub-type 2 journalists all had journalism degrees, all worked in medium market stations, and had slightly more TV news experience than the others (see Table 5). This group's greater socialization into journalism was likely more sensitive to non-news intrusions.

Sub-type 3 journalists saw a greater impact of news sources on their work (see Table 4). Interestingly, although these people saw that source-originated news was frequently selected, they were also less likely than the other groups to see that as a problem. Again, cautious application of background information helps shed light on this finding. Sub-type 3 journalists had fewer years of TV news experience than the others, they were more likely to work in a small media market, and were less likely to have a journalism degree. In other words, they were less socialized into journalistic traditions than the others.

This finding makes sense because smaller media markets represent consensus-oriented communities, where the power structure is questioned less (Soloski, 1989; Tichenor, Donohue, & Olien, 1980). News from sources is accepted more willingly in these communities. Further, less experienced journalists would be more reliant on the news that that comes in from sources, as they learned the ropes of their vocation. Because most of the group did not have a journalism degree, they would not have as strong a belief about objectivity that requires independence from news sources.

Assessing Respondent Comments

Responses to the open-ended questionnaire item offered an interesting interplay with the main response pattern. Twenty of the 47 respondents added a comment to their questionnaire. Although responses to the 40 Likert-scale items suggested that the journalists believed local television news should follow traditional journalistic ideals, comments nonetheless expressed a concern about industry practices. Some journalists felt that local television news has been accused of sensationalizing and "info-tainment," but that the reputation was largely unearned. Many, however, didn't deny that packaging news does occur. Sometimes they thought it was beneficial, as one reporter explained:

> I feel first we select what is important, interesting, or unusual, and then we try to make the presentation of that story as entertaining and as palatable to our viewers as possible....In short, there may be news and information the public needs to know or should know, but it's our job to make them want to know it.

Other journalists viewed sensational or entertainment-oriented news unfavorably, but felt they were not the guilty party. Instead, they passed blame onto their local competitors. One news director summarized these views:

> There are a lot of misconceptions about news selection in television, due primarily to Hollywood stereotyping.... And of course, there are some terrible local news organizations that fall into these traps but would never admit it. The good, hard news stations get tarred by the same brush as bad stations.

A second theme emerged from the open-ended item, but spoke to a different concern: the ability to answer survey items easily.

News selection in local television, several journalists urged, cannot be defined by a typical news day. Rather, what influenced news selection one day might not be the same on the next. One assignment editor explained his views:

> Each day a new set of criteria impact our rundown. It depends on so many factors that there is no hard, fast rule for how we decide.

There were other reasons for this difficulty. Some respondents found an internal conflict when they tried to separate their ideal views from the newsroom practices they observed. A reporter expressed his concerns like this:

> What is selected as news by producers, assignment editors, and news directors at my station is not necessarily what I view as news. Hopefully, they coincide as much as possible, but that's not always the case--hence some conflicting answers on your survey.

This second theme agrees with what past studies have often found: news selection does not amount to clear-cut decision-making that carefully and consciously considers relevant factors, and then chooses news based on an explicit journalistic rationale (Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978).

Conclusions

This study began by considering a framework for news selection based on job differentiation in a profit-making organization. Data, however, found that perceptions toward news selection were not split by the distinction between information gatherers and news managers. Instead, socialization into journalism, expressed in terms of experience and training, seemed to have been a key factor delineating viewpoints. Even there, the analysis suggested that all the journalists surveyed had fairly similar orientations along traditional journalistic lines. They did, however, believe that TV technology tends to provide a different version of traditional journalism.

What is important to remember here is that data came from a questionnaire asking journalists to explain how they saw news selection. This question is different than studying what actually takes place in local TV newsrooms. The real value of this study, then, is not to explicate the "real" news selection process of local television, but instead, to see how local television journalists view their work. To argue that these journalists' perceptions corresponded to traditional journalistic views, then, is not to argue that local TV news is actually traditional journalism.

Observational studies of newswork, for example, have looked at the work process itself, and have come to a different conclusion about what takes place. Many of these studies argue that newswork involves strategic routines for accomplishing work, rather than explicit decision-making based on clearly defined criteria (Bantz, McCorkle, & Baade, 1980; Fishman, 1980; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). That view is based on different data, the data of an observer and analyst, rather than a participant and employee. Likely, local television journalists in this study presented ideal views of their work rather than pondering what actually takes place. Future research might attempt to sort out actual from ideal, and then relate those findings to observational data.

It is important when considering these findings to also remember that data were gathered from journalists in only one Midwest state that had no large-market television stations. Large-market TV journalists _might_ have a different view of their work, both because of greater market pressures and because of the greater experience required to reach a larger market. Regional differences are also possible, so that local TV journalists in other parts of the country might view their work differently.

# # #

References

Bantz, C. R. (1985). News organizations: Conflict as a crafted cultural norm. Communication, 8, 225-244.

Bantz, C. R., McCorkle, S., & Baade, R. C. (1980). The news factory. Communication Research, 7, 45-68.

Becker, L. B. (1982). Print or broadcast: How the medium influences the reporter. In J. Ettema S. & D. C. Whitney (Eds.), Individuals in mass media organizations: Creativity and constraint (pp. 145-161). Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Berkowitz, D. (1990). Refining the gatekeeping metaphor for local television. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, 34, 55-68.

Berkowitz, D. (in press). Assessing forces in the selection of local television news. Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media.

Brown, S. R. (1980). Political subjectivity: Applications of Q methodology in political science. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Butters, B. E. (1990, August). Local TV news before and after SNG. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Minneapolis, MN.

Carroll, R. L. (1985). Content values in TV news programs in small and large markets. Journalism Quarterly, 62, 877-882.

Carroll, R. L. (1989). Market size and TV news values. Journalism Quarterly, 66, 49-56.

Dracos, T. (1989, September). TV news directors are lousy managers. Washington Journalism Review, pp. 38-41.

Dunwoody, S. (1978). Science writers at work. Research Report No. 7. Bloomington: Center for New Communications, Indiana University.

Epstein, E. J. (1973). News from nowhere: Television and the news. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Fishman, M. (1980). Manufacturing the news. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Gandy, O. H. (1982). Beyond agenda setting: Information subsidies and public policy. Norwood, NJ: Ablex.

Gans, H. J. (1979). Deciding what's news: A study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time. New York: Pantheon.

Gitlin, T. (1980). *The whole world is watching: Mass media in the making and unmaking of the new left*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Harmon, M. (1989). Mr. Gates goes electronic: The what and why questions in local TV news. *Journalism Quarterly*, *66*, 857-863.

Lincoln, Y., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

McKeown, B., & Thomas, D. (1988). *Q methodology*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Schultz, E. (1990, March). News heads need managerial assistants. *Washington Journalism Review*, p. 12.

Shoemaker, P. J., & Mayfield, E. K. (1987). Building a theory of news content: A synthesis of current approaches. *Journalism Monographs*, *103*.

Smith, C., & Becker, L. B. (1989). Comparison of journalistic values of television reporters and producers. *Journalism Quarterly*, *66*, 793-800.

Soloski, J. (1989). Sources and channels of local news. *Journalism Quarterly*, *66*, 864-870.

Stephenson, W. (1972). Applications of communication theory: II--interpretations of Keats' 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. *The Psychological Record*, *22*, 177-192.

Stocking, S. H., & Gross, P. H. (1989). *How do journalists think? A proposal for the study of cognitive bias in newsmaking*. Bloomington, IN: ERIC Clearinghouse.

Tichenor, P. J., Donohue, G. A., & Olien, C. N. (1980). *Community conflict and the press*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Tuchman, G. (1978). *Making news: A study in the construction of reality*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.

Weaver, D., Drew, D., & Wilhoit, G. C. (1986). U.S. television, radio, and daily newspaper journalists. *Journalism Quarterly*, *63*, 683-692.

Wulfemeyer, K. T. (1982). A content analysis of local television newscasts: Answering the critics. *Journal of Broadcasting*, *26*, 481-486.

Table 1

Strongest agreement/disagreement items in the total sample (n=47)

Item description	Average Z-score
14. The news that appears on local television should provide a representative record of what takes place in the community.	2.01
23. News selection decisions should mainly be based on factors such as significance, timeliness, level of conflict, known principals, and local angle.	2.00
38. Journalists should select news primarily on the basis of what's important.	1.58
27. The technological demands of reporting television news often dictate different kinds of stories than those appearing in newspapers.	1.42
30. A television journalist selects news stories mainly because they are relevant to the audience.	1.28
32. The ability to air "live" stories has changed the kind of stories on television news.	1.17
11. Stories are often selected because they fulfill a need in the newscast format, rather than because of their merits as news.	-1.01
37. Story selections are often made with an eye for minimizing the use of available resources.	-1.11
24. Stories are frequently selected because they can showcase the station's new technology.	-1.14
3. Given one story that is slightly more newsworthy and one that is easier to cover, the easier story will generally be selected.	-1.30
17. A television newscast should contain more stories considered "interesting" than "important."	-1.31
9. Local television news is just another element of television entertainment.	-1.42
31. Because of the newscast format, the news on local television usually does not provide a realitic picture of what takes place in the community.	-1.57
22. The desire to please advertisers has a noticeable impact on the news that is selected.	-1.96

Table 2

Pearson correlations of item Z-scores among the Main prototype and three Sub-types for all 40 items.

	Main type (n=47)	Sub-type 1 (n=11)	Sub-type 2 (n=6)	Sub-type 3 (n=8)
Main type	1.00			
Sub-type 1	.90	1.00		
Sub-type 2	.67	.49	1.00	
Sub-type 3	.79	.58	.40	1.00

Table 3

Sub-type 2 items of greatest Z-score difference from closest Sub-type (n=6)

Item description	Z-score	Nearest Z-score	Difference
11. Stories are often selected because they fulfill a need in the newscast format, rather than because of their merits as news.	0.89	-1.21	2.10
18. Management indirectly has a great impact on the stories that are aired by specifying the format that newscasts will follow.	1.12	-0.59	1.71
10. Stories seem to be chosen more to attract viewers than because of their actual importance.	-0.04	1.66	1.62
31. The needs of the newscast format strongly shape which stories are selected.	0.51	-0.74	1.25
3. Given one story that is slightly more newsworthy and one that is easier to cover, the easier story will generally be selected.	-1.86	-0.86	-1.00
17. A television newscast should contain more stories considered "interesting" than "important."	-2.64	-1.17	-1.47
30. A television journalist selects news stories mainly because they are relevant to the audience.	-0.78	1.30	-2.08

Table 4

Sub-type 3 items of greatest Z-score difference from closest Sub-type (n=8)

Item description	Z-score	Nearest Z-score	Difference
22. The desire to please advertisers has a noticeable impact on the news that is selected.	-0.19	-1.88	1.69
20. A good proportion of my station's stories originate through news releases we have received.	0.81	-0.76	1.57
39. If an organization holds a news conference, the story will generally be covered.	0.74	-0.35	1.09
25. News releases should not be a major source of stories for local television.	-1.29	1.50	-2.72

Table 5

Key background characteristics of the respondents[a]

Background measure	Main Prototype (n=47)	Sub-type 2 (n=6)	Sub-type 3 (n=8)
Journalism degree			
no	23.9%	0.0%	50.0%
yes	76.1	100.0	50.0
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Market size			
small (138, 149)	27.7%	0.0%	62.5%
medium (66, 78, 81)	72.3	100.0	37.5
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Years of experience			
mean	6.5	7.3	3.8
standard deviation	4.9	5.2	3.5
Work role			
information gatherer	51.1%	66.7%	50.0%
news manager	48.9	33.3	50.0
TOTAL	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

[a] Information for Sub-type 1 is not included because of that group's close similarity to the main pattern of responses.

Negativity and Visualization as Criteria for News Selection in Local Television Newscasts

by

Stephen C. Coon
Associate Professor
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011
(515) 294-0498

Eric Hing-Tat Tse
Graduate Student
Department of Journalism and Mass Communication
Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa 50011

This paper is presented to the Radio-Television Journalism Division, Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, August 7--10, 1991, Boston, Massachusetts.

Negativity and Visualization as Criteria for News Selection in Local Television Newscasts

The role of television as the principal source of news for many Americans is well documented. Several studies have demonstrated that viewers in the United States not only rely on television for news of the world around them, but are also generally satisfied with and have confidence in television news compared with information from other mass media. These findings have remained relatively constant over time.[1] Bower found that Americans watch television news because it's fair, fast and complete.[2] Stone and Grusin's study showed that television was thought by respondents to be more believable than news obtained through either radio or newspapers.[3] McDonald and Reese also compared television news with newspaper news. Their findings were consistent with earlier studies--television news was said to be the most reliable medium of current events compared with newspapers.[4]

If so many Americans receive so much of their news from television, what kind of news are viewers getting? Critics are quick to respond that television news tries to entertain rather than to inform. Television as a visual medium, they argue, chooses action over significance, prefers violence rather than reason.[5] In short, television is drawn to the most compelling images of events and these pictures tend to paint the world in negative hues.

Previous studies of television support the contention that negative news is a common element in newscasts. Golding and Elliott concluded: "There is little mileage in reporting the safe arrival of aircraft, the continued health of a film star, or the smooth untroubled negotiations of a wage settlement. News is about disruptions in the normal current of events."[6]

The attraction and prevalence of negative news stories, however, is not the sole domain of television. Haskins and Miller pointed out that "bad (negative) news gets preferred treatment in all news media. It is displayed more prominently than other news, in terms of space, more pictorial and graphic attention--getting devices, and up-front placement. This is true for both print and broadcast." [7]

There is substantial evidence that negative news on television is not only commonplace, it is far more frequent than either positive or neutral news. The findings of Stone and Grusin in their study of network television news showed that negative news dominated early evening newscasts on ABC, CBS and NBC.[8] They found that there was a greater percentage of negative news than of positive or neutral news for all three network newscasts. They also found a greater percentage of negative news than positive news for each individual network newscast.

This tendency to emphasize negative news also appears to hold true for specific types of news. Dominick's study of business news on the networks showed there were more negative news stories (54.1 percent) about strikes, the environment, health issues, product recalls, industrial accidents and illegal financial dealings, compared with either positive (10 percent) or neutral (35.9 percent) business news.[9]

Negative news, however, is not exclusive to network television. Local stations also appear to carry more negative news items than either positive or neutral stories--at least in larger markets. Dominick, Wurtzel, and Lometti examined the the local affiliates of ABC, CBS and NBC in New York City.

Their analysis indicated that local television stations tended to stress stories about violence, which was defined as any force that caused harm to persons or property. The researchers concluded that this emphasis on violence by local stations could arouse viewer interest.[10]

Roberts and Dickson found that local stations in Mobile, Alabama and Pensacola, Florida allotted greater time to news about crime than to any other category except the weather.[11] Stone, Hartung and Jensen looked at television newscasts in three other local markets and reached similar conclusions. They found there was more negative news than positive news broadcast on television stations in Memphis, San Diego and Syracuse.[12]

Visualization as a Television Value

Television is a visual medium and good visuals are considered indispensable to the success of a television network or local station. This is true whether the network or station is trying to attract viewers and advertisers to its entertainment programs or to its newscasts. MacNeil stated that "most of the energy and organization of television goes into getting pictures."[13]

Television news directors, producers and editors likewise employ visuals to attract viewers. Schuneman surveyed 205 news directors about their use of visuals in newscasts. More than three-fourths of the respondents said that newsfilm was the major tool of television news.[14] Television networks and local stations tend to stress negative stories and prefer news with video rather than stories without visuals. These same news operations also tend to use more video with negative stories than with either positive or neutral news items.[15]

The lead story of the television newscast has special significance. The linear nature of television news forces the news producer to select the one story, which in his or her judgment, is the most important or interesting of the day.[16] Unlike the newspaper editor, the television news producer does not have the luxury of clustering several possible lead stories on the front page. The news producer must choose one lead story from all the available news items the news team has assembled. Because television is a visual medium and because television tends to emphasize negative news items, the news producer will tend to select as the lead a negative story with riveting video. Previous studies have indicated that not only will the lead story more often than not be a negative news item with visual treatment, but that the majority of all negative news items in the newscast will occur in the first half of the newscast.[17]

Although it is evident that negative news and use of visuals dominate local newscasts in larger markets it is unclear whether one can safely extrapolate the findings of previous research to all local stations. The majority of studies have examined television either at the network level or in large markets on the East and West Coasts and medium markets in the South. Television markets are categorized according to Arbitron Television's Areas of Dominant Influence (ADI), which divides the nation into 213 individual markets. New York City is the largest market (1 ADI) and Glen Dive, Montana is the smallest market (213 ADI).[18] Little research has been published regarding the amount of negative news seen on local newscasts in medium and small markets in the Midwest. Previous studies have examined television news in large to medium markets--

New York (1 ADI), Memphis (41 ADI), San Diego (24 ADI), Syracuse (68 ADI) and Mobile-Pensacola (63).

The current study attempts to determine if earlier findings regarding the relationship between negativity and visualization in local television newscasts hold true for a medium-sized market in the Midwest. The early evening local newscasts of three network affiliates in the Ames/Des Moines, Iowa market (66 ADI) were examined.

Based on previous research the following hypotheses are posited:

> H1: The total number of negative news items on the local newscasts of the ABC, CBS and NBC affiliates in Ames/Des Moines is greater than that of either neutral or positive news items.
>
> H2: Negative news items are placed in the lead position of the local newscasts more often than either neutral or positive news items.
>
> H3: More visual techniques are used for negative news items than for either neutral or positive news items.

Method

Three network affiliates carry local television newscasts in Ames/Des Moines, Iowa. WOI (channel 5, ABC), KCCI (channel 8, CBS) and WHO (channel 13, NBC). The independent station KDSM (channel 17, Fox Television) and the public television station (channel 11, PBS) have no local newscasts and were excluded from this study.

The local newscasts at 6:00 p.m. for KCCI and WHO were selected as the sampling period. WHO has two local evening newscasts: one between 5:00 and 5:30 p.m. and the other between 6:00 and 6:30 p.m. WHO carries the network news between 5:30 and 6:00 p.m. WHO's 6 p.m. local newscast was chosen for this study because it immediately follows the NBC newscast at 5:30 and WHO is therefore more likely to concentrate on local news rather than repeat national and world news aired during the previous half-hour. WOI has its only early evening local newscast at 5 p.m.. Therefore, this newscast was chosen for analysis.

A composite week was used for this study. The sampling period began October 8, 1990 and concluded on November 9, 1990. The selection of October 8, 1990 as the starting point was arbitrary. Evening newscasts of the three local stations were videotaped on the following days: Monday of the first week, Tuesday of the second week, Wednesday of the third week, Thursday of the fourth week and Friday of the fifth week. Because none of the three stations had an early weekend evening newscast at either 5 p.m. or 6 p.m. during the dates of the study weekend newscasts were excluded.

For this study the unit of analysis was an individual news item. Because the present study focuses on negative, positive and neutral news, stories about sports, weather, the stock market or news teases were not included. A news tease is defined as a phrase or sentence with just enough information about an upcoming story to help keep television viewers tuned to the newscast.[19] Stories about sports, weather or the stock market were counted as news items only if they were part of the regular newscast rather than aired during the scheduled sports, weather or market segment.

The definitions of negative and positive news are borrowed from Gieber.[20] Negative News is defined as any news item reporting social conflicts and disorganization. Positive News is any news item reporting social cohesion and cooperation. Neutral News, for this study, is any news item that is neither negative, nor positive, or is equally balanced.

The operational definition of negative news is adapted from Lowry[21] and the operational definition of positive news from Gieber.[22]

Every news story was coded for one of five possible visual treatments:

1. Reader (the newscaster reading with no video other than a topic box to one side of the anchor's head)

2. Talking Head (recorded audio and video of principal news source)

3. Still Story (full screen graphic or other static visual in place of the newscaster's image. Newscaster is heard, but not seen)

4. Video Report (film or video with moving images and with audio related to the news story content. This includes packages and VO/SOT's)

5. Live Conversation (live interview between newscaster and person involved in news story)

Three coders viewed a half-hour local newscast as a preliminary test of agreement. The coders recorded a 96 percent level of composite reliability coefficient using the Holsti method.[23]

Tables 1 and 2

All the local evening newscasts of WOI, KCCI, and WHO are divided into five segments. Segment here refers to the content of a newscast between commercial breaks. Usually, these stations carry news items in the first two segments, weather in Segment Three, sports in Segment Four and soft news (features) in Segment Five. For this study it was deemed convenient to break each newscast into five segments for purposes of analysis.

Findings

A total of 15 evening newscasts with 136 news items from the three local affiliates of ABC, CBS and NBC were videotaped in a composite week between October 8, 1990 and November 13, 1990. The second week (Tuesday, October 16, 1990) KCCI's evening newscast could not be recorded due to technical difficulties. Therefore, the Tuesday evening newscasts of the three stations were videotaped in the sixth week (November 13, 1990).

The principal local news issues during the period of this study were the Iowa gubernatorial campaign between Republican Governor Terry Branstad and his Democratic challenger Don Avenson, and the U.S. Senatorial race featuring incumbent Democrat Tom Harkin and Republican Representative Tom Tauke. Also receiving media attention during the composite week were federal budget talks, the occupation of Kuwait by Iraqi military forces and the deployment of American troops in Saudi Arabia.

Hypothesis One states that the total number of negative news items on the local newscasts of the ABC, CBS and NBC affiliates in Ames/Des Moines is greater than that of either neutral or positive news items. Hypothesis One is supported. The three local television stations carried a total of 136 news items in the composite week. All three local stations emphasized negative news. Of the 136 news items, 82 stories (60.3 percent) were negative, 34 stories (25 percent) were neutral, and 20 news stories (14.7 percent) were positive. Even the sum total of all neutral and positive news stories (39.7 percent) is 28 news items (20.6 percent) fewer than the number of negative stories.

As seen in Table 3, more than half of the news items fell into the accidents/disasters and crime classifications. Of the 82 negative news items, slightly more than one-third (34.1 percent) were accidents/disasters, and 25 news items (30.5 percent) were about crime, 11 stories (13.4 percent) dealt with social conflicts, 5 news items (6.1 percent) concerned international tension, and 13 stories (15.9 percent) fell into the other category.

Table 3

A total of 20 positive news items was broadcast by the three local television stations. Slightly more than half of these news items (55 percent) were classified as society at work, one-fourth of the stories (25 percent) were listed as government at work, and one-fifth (20 percent) fell into the personalities classification. Thirty-four news items were considered neutral.

Hypothesis Two states that negative news items are placed in the lead position of the local newscasts more often than either neutral or positive news items. Hypothesis Two also is supported. As shown in Table 4 the distribution of news items indicates that in general the number of news items in news sections diminishes as the newscast progresses. This was true for all three stations.

Table 4

The first two segments of the newscast carried the majority of news items. Eighty nine (65.4 percent) of the 136 news items were located in the first segment of the local newscasts. The second segment carried 33 news stories (24.3 percent). The third and fourth segments were always devoted to weather and sports respectively. The fifth and final segment carried only 9 news stories (6.6 percent).

There was a statistically significant relationship between the type of news item and the position of that news item in a newscast. (Table 5) These results show that negative news items were most often placed in the first segment of the news program. In fact, 76.4 percent of the news stories in the first segment of the newscast were negative news items. A greater portion of either neutral or positive news stories was found toward the end of the newscast.

Table 5

Hypothesis Three states that more visual techniques are used for negative news items than for either neutral or positive news items. Hypothesis Three is not supported. Four different variables were examined--talking head, still story, video report, and live conversation--to see whether negative stories received more visual treatment. The results show no statistically significant relationship between the types of news items and the visual techniques employed.

As can be seen in Table 6 most news items (80.9 percent) contained video reports. Almost three-fourths of them (74.3 percent) used talking heads. Slightly more than half (55.1 percent) of these contained still graphics. Slightly more than one-tenth (11.8 percent) of the news items contained live conversation reports.

Table 6

Each visual technique was examined to see whether negative news stories received more use of that technique than did either neutral or positive news items. There was no statistically significant relationship between the type of news item and the use of talking heads at the 0.05 level. Talking heads appeared more often with neutral news items (88.2 percent) than with either negative (70.7 percent) or positive news stories (65 percent). Regardless of the story type, news items using talking heads were more numerous than news stories not using talking heads.

As for the still story, there was virtually no difference between news types and still story treatment. The percentage of neutral and positive news items using the still story treatment was the same (50 percent). Negative news items (58.5 percent) tended to use more still stories than did either neutral or positive news items, but the difference was not statistically significant.

With regard to video reports, there was no statistically significant relationship between the type of news item and its video treatment at the 0.05 level. There were more news stories of all types with video reports that news items without video reports. Although negative items (82.9 percent) had more video reports than did neutral items (73.5 percent), positive items (85 percent) employed video treatment more often than either negative or neutral news stories.

Concerning the visual treatment of live conversations, no statistically significant relationship was found between the type of news item and the use of live conversations. In this study, there were fewer negative news items with live conversations (8.5 percent) than neutral items (16.7 percent). These differences, however, did not indicate a statistically significant relationship.

Discussion

The results of this study demonstrate that the local evening newscasts in the Ames/Des Moines, Iowa market do stress negative news items to a greater degree than either positive or neutral news items. Furthermore, the lead story in the newscasts tends to be a negative news item more often than either a positive or neutral story. These findings are consistent with earlier studies of network and large market local television newscasts.

These results can be explained in part from an economic and production perspective. The three local stations in the current study are commercial operations. Their financial fortunes are linked to the popularity (ratings) of their news and entertainment schedule. The more viewers a local station can attract the higher advertising rates management can charge potential advertisers. To increase ratings for their news programs, local stations may be inclined to use negative stories because negative news has been shown to attract viewers.

News producers believe they need to arrange news items in a certain order. As mentioned by Green (1969), the items placed at the top of the newscast should be the most significant stories of the day. The data acquired in the current study show that negative news items were placed in the lead position more often than either positive or neutral items.

These results agree with Green's study that indicated that the frequency of hard news decreases near the end of the newscast. In fact, there appears to be a conscious effort by news producers to try to conclude television newscasts on a light note with an upbeat story or feature.

This study did not show that negative news items use more visual techniques than did either positive or neutral stories. However, the results show that there is a relationship between the length of news items and application of visual techniques. The longer the news item the more likely the story is to use some form of visual technique--regardless of whether that news story is a negative, positive or neutral item. Length, therefore, appears to be a determining factor in the use of visual treatment.

Although generally supporting earlier findings on negativity and visualization in television newscasts, this study did discover some differences from earlier studies. The present study focused on a single market in the Midwest. Stone, Hartung and Jensen compared three local markets in different regions of the nation. Furthermore, Stone, Hartung and Jensen study looked only at the first thirty minutes of local newscasts. Some of the newscasts in the markets surveyed ran as long as 90 minutes and were not examined. Whether negative news items with visual treatment appeared throughout the newscasts cannot be determined. It is possible that the ratio of negative news items to either positive or neutral stories might be different depending on the length of the newscast.

Dominick demonstrated that negative news tends to dominate television coverage business news. Roberts and Dickson in their study found that crime was the single largest news category. However, these findings may not hold true for all types of news. In the present study, feature stories were categorized as either positive or neutral news items. This finding may imply a trend toward greater use of locally produced or syndicated feature stories and the subsequent increase in the number of stories coded as either positive or neutral.

The results of the present study might have been influenced by the amount of local coverage devoted to Iowa's gubernatorial and senatorial campaigns. These stories were coded as neutral because they did not involve either social conflict or disorganization (negative news), or social cohesion or cooperation (positive news). Seven (20.6 percent) of the thirty-four neutral items in this study were about the election campaigns or the debates between the candidates.

Feature stories constituted a sizeable portion of the news aired during the period of the study. These included reports on medical developments, gas price information, child education and new consumer products. These features were coded either as positive or neutral and they tended to run longer than non-feature stories and used more visual treatment. As was noted previously length of stories was positively related to visual treatment.

This study was conducted between October 8, 1990 and November 13, 1990. Because November is a "sweeps month" (television rating period), there is a possibility that the three local stations might have carried a greater variety and number of stories than would be true during a non-sweeps period. Furthermore, many of these stories might have been special reports of greater depth and visual treatment assembled specifically for this rating period and could have affected the results of the study.

The intent of this study was to determine whether negativity and visualization are criteria in the selection and treatment of stories for a local television newscast in a medium market. The acquired data show that the local newscasts studied did tend to stress negative stories rather than positive or neutral news items. Furthermore, all stories--whether positive, negative or neutral--tended to employ one of four visual treatments.

What is not known, however, is whether negativity and visualization as criteria in the selection and treatment of local news are constants. If, as we have noted, stations use more feature stories--whether locally produced or syndicated--and these features tend to run longer than other news stories, the ratio of negative stories to positive or neutral news items may change. Furthermore, the efforts of news producers and station management to increase ratings during the "sweeps months" and the impact of those efforts on news selection has not been measured fully. Additional studies comparing news decisions during ratings and non-ratings period are in order.

TABLE 1

SUBCATEGORIES OF NEGATIVE NEWS

1.	Armed Conflict/War	All stories concerning armed conflicts between social groups, nations, or groups of nations. This armed conflict can be as small as a commando unit of a few soldiers or as large as a full scale war.
2.	International Tensions	All stories concerning conflicts or disagreements between nations (political, diplomatic, economic) where the conflicts or disagreements stop short of armed conflicts or wars.
3.	Social Conflict/ Strikes/Riots	All stories concerning the failure of individuals or society to function in a cooperative integrative manner. These events may be national rather than international, land may conflict between individuals or groups.
4.	Crime	All stories concerning extra-legal acts not included in armed conflicts and social conflicts/strikes/riots.
5.	Accidents/Disasters	All stories resulting from "acts of God" or unforeseen events that lead to personal injury or destruction of life or property.
6.	Other News	All stories that would have been negative news to some people. For instance, air and water pollution stories do not fit into the aforementioned categories, and are classified as other news.

TABLE 2
SUBCATEGORIES OF POSITIVE NEWS

1.	International Cooperation	Normal relations among nations.
2.	Government at Work	Information on the affairs of the government.
3.	Society at Work	Information about groups of persons cooperating in non-governmental affairs.
4.	Personalities	News items about individuals.

TABLE 3
FREQUENCY OF NEGATIVE NEWS ITEMS

Negative News Classification	Frequency	Percent
Armed Conflict/War	0	0
International Tension	5	6.1
Social Conflicts/Strikes/Riots	11	13.4
Crime	25	30.5
Accidents/Disasters	28	34.1
Other News	13	15.9

TABLE 4
NEWS ITEMS AND DISTRIBUTION WITHIN NEWS SEGMENTS

Segment of Newscast	Frequency	Percent
First Segment	89	65.44
Second Segment	33	24.3
Third Segment	4	2.94
Fourth Segment	1	0.7
Fifth Segment	9	6.61
TOTAL	136	99.99

TABLE 5
RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NEWS TYPES AND POSITION

Count (items) Row% Column%	First Segment	Other Segments	Row Total
Negative Item	68	14	82
	82.9	17.1	60.3
	76.4	29.8	
Neutral Item	13	21	82
	38.2	61.8	25.0
	14.6	44.7	
Positive Item	8	12	20
	40.0	60.0	14.7
	9.0	25.5	
Column	89	47	136
TOTAL	65.4	34.6	100.0

Chi-square = 27.937
DF 2
Significant at the .05 level

TABLE 6
FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION OF VISUAL TECHNIQUES*

Type of Visual	Treatment	No Treatment	Percent
Talking Head	101 items	35 items	74.3
Still	75	61	55.1
Video	110	26	80.9
Live	16	120	11.8

*Some news items employed more than one visual treatment

Footnotes

1. Carter, Richard R. and Bradley S. Greenberg, "Newspapers or Television: Which Do You Believe?" Journalism Quarterly 42, No. 2 (1965): 29--34

2. Bower, Robert T. Television and the Public, New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc. 1973

3. Stone, Gerald C. and Elinor Grusin, "Network TV as the Bad News Bearer," Journalism Quarterly, 61, No. 3 (Autumn, 1984): 517-523

4. McDonald, Daniel G. and Stephen D. Reese, "Television News and Audience Selectivity," Journalism Quarterly, 64, No. 4 (Winter, 1987): 763-768

5. Cole, Barry. Television Today: A Close-Up View New York: Oxford University Press, 1981

6. Golding, Peter and Phillip Elliott Making the News New York: Longman, 1979

7. Haskins, Jack B. and M. Mark Miller, "The Effects of Bad News and Good News on a Newspaper's Image." Journalism Quarterly 61, No. 1 (Spring, 1984): 3-13

8. Stone, Op Cit. , pp. 517--523

9. Dominick, Joseph R. "Business Coverage in Network Newscasts," Journalism Quarterly 58, No. 2 (Summer, 1981): 179-185

10. Dominick, Joseph R., Alan Wurtzel and Guy Lometti, "Television Journalism vs. Show Business: A Content Analysis of Eyewitness News," Journalism Quarterly 52, No. 2 (Summer, 1975): 213-218

11. Roberts, Churchill L. and Sandra H. Dickson, "Assessing Quality in Local TV News," Journalism Quarterly 61, No. 1 (Spring 1984): 392-398

12. Stone, Gerald, Barbara Hartung and Dwight Jensen, "Local TV News and the Good-Bad Dyad," Journalism Quarterly 64, No. 1 (Spring, 1987): 37-44

13. MacNeil, Robert. The People Machine: The Influence of Television on American Politics. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968

14. Schuneman, R. Smith. "Visual Aspects of Television News: Communicator, Message, Equipment," Journalism Quarterly 43, No. 2 (Summer, 1966): 281-286

15. Stone, Op Cit., pp. 517-523

16. Foote, Joe S. and Michael E. Steele. "Degree of Conformation in Lead Story in Early Evening Network TV Newscasts," Journalism Quarterly 63, No. 1 (Spring, 1986): 19-23

17. Stone, et all., Op Cit., pp. 37-44

18. Broadcasting Yearbook 1990, pp. C-210-212

19. Shook, Frederick. Television Field Production and Reporting. New York: Longman Inc., 1989

20. Gieber, Walter. "Do Newspapers Overplay 'Negative' News?" Journalism Quarterly 32 (1955): 311-318

21. Lowry, Dennis T. "Gresham's Law and Network TV News Selection." Journal of Broadcasting 15, No. 4 (Fall, 1971): 397-408

22. Gieber, Op. Cit., pp. 311-318

23. Holsti, Ole R. Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1969, pp. 137-140

A Model of Job Satisfaction in Local Television Newsrooms

by

Angela Powers
Assistant Professor
Department of Journalism
Northern Illinois University
Dekalb, Illinois 60115
(815) 753-7011

and

Stephen Lacy
Associate Professor
School of Journalism
Michigan State University
East Lansing, Michigan 48824
(517) 355-2489

presented to
the Radio-Television Journalism Research Session
Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication

Annual Convention
1991
Boston, MA

Despite the advancement of organizational theory, the application of such principles to mass media organizations remains in its infancy. Using the Tannenbaum and Schmidt model and path-goal theory, this study develops a conceptual model for job satisfaction in local television news departments.

Results indicate that local television journalists in large newsrooms perceive less consideration success than do those in newsrooms located in smaller markets.

Findings also suggest that relationship and task behavior are not ends of the same continuum of management behavior. Journalists recognized and accepted variation of leadership behavior.

Finally, the most important variable in the model for predicting job satisfaction among local television journalists was the relationship behavior of the news director.

A Model of Job Satisfaction in Local Television Newsrooms

Early scientific approaches to management showed little concern with the satisfaction of employees (Taylor, 1947; Tausky, 1980). Since then, scholars and practitioners have adopted a more humanistic approach. In doing so, a great deal has been learned about factors that influence job performance, such as job satisfaction and leadership.

Despite the advancement of organizational theory, the application of such principles to mass media organizations remains in its infancy. This study will develop a conceptual model for job satisfaction in local television news departments. The model will then be tested empirically with the purpose of better understanding how job satisfaction can be improved at local television news departments.

Theoretical Background

A basic role of management is to motivate employees to efficiently pursue and accomplish the goals of the organization (Barnard, 1938). Gans (1979) stated that newsroom efficiency is not solely associated with obtaining the highest profit at the lowest cost. Rather, newsroom efficiency exists to allocate the scarce resources of production, air time and staff.

A key factor in generating this efficiency is leadership. It is the leader who organizes and motivates the workers to reach the firm's goals. Consequently, the leader can play an important role in creating job satisfaction among employees.

Recent theories and research indicate that leadership involves behavior that varies with and is constrained by the situations requiring decisions (Griffin and Moorhead, 1988).

While several models of "situational leadership" have developed, this study will use two of the better known models as a starting point. These leadership models are being used as a starting point for three reasons: (1) they explicitly include job satisfaction as an independent variable; (2) leadership plays an important role in job satisfaction (French, 1968); (3) these leadership models identify several types of variables that affect job satisfaction. The first is the Tannenbaum and Schmidt model, which was developed during the 1950s and then revised slightly in the 1970s (Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1973). This model identified three types of forces that determine appropriate leadership behavior.

The second model is called path-goal theory (House and Dessler, 1974). A basic proposition of the theory is that one of the strategic functions of the leader is to enhance the psychological states of subordinates that influence satisfaction with the job and motivation to perform.

These two models are the basis for the following review of theories and research about factors that affect job satisfaction. Five factors will be reviewed: leadership, individual characteristics, organizational characteristics, market forces and individual perceptions. Then, existing research about job satisfaction among journalists will be reviewed.

Leadership

Leadership differs from management in that management relies on legitimate power to influence people, while leadership comes from a social influence process (Griffin and Moorhead, 1986, p. 347). Those managers who are also leaders influence moods, develop fresh approaches, and create excitement at work (Giles, 1987, p. 198).

The path-goal model distinguishes between varying degrees of relationship-oriented leadership behavior and task-oriented leadership behavior. Relationship-oriented behavior is the extent to which the behavior of the manager is indicative of friendship, mutual trust and respect, and good human relations between the leader and group. Task-oriented behavior is the extent to which the behavior of the manager tends toward organizing and defining the relationships between himself and the group, in defining interactions among group members, establishing ways of getting the job done, scheduling, criticizing, etc. (Fleishman, 1956, pp. 349-371).

Two classes of situational variables are assumed to moderate the effect of the leader's behavior on subordinates' satisfaction and productivity. These are personal characteristics of subordinates and environmental pressures subordinates must cope with to accomplish work goals and satisfy personal needs (House and Dessler, 1974, pp. 31-32).

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) said leadership falls on a continuum between boss-centered (autocratic) and subordinate-centered (democratic) leader behavior. They also stated that the appropriate leadership style is determined by the interaction among forces in the manager, forces in the subordinates, and forces in the situations.

The effectiveness of differing leader behavior, according to Barnard (1938), depends on how well subordinates accept such authority. He suggested that subordinates must first be able to understand what the leader is communicating. Then employees must perceive that what is being asked of them is consistent with the purposes of the organization or their own personal interests. Therefore, it appears that perceptions of how successful managers are at meeting organizational goals and employee needs would positively affect job satisfaction.

Individual Factors

Employees are influenced by their own personal characteristics, as well as leadership. Personal characteristics include education, experience, age, and years with and organization. Hersey and Blanchard (1972) argued that an effective leader varies leadership behavior based on the personal characteristics of subordinates. For example, as employees' maturity level, age, experience, and years with the company increase, leader behavior should be characterized by a decreasing emphasis on task structuring behaviors and an increasing emphasis on relationship-oriented behaviors.

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) stated that managers can give employees greater freedom if they understand and identify with the goals of the organization, have necessary knowledge and experience, are independent, can deal with ambiguity, and have learned to expect a share of decision making.

Organizational Factors

According to the path-goal theory, organizational factors include: the subordinates' task, the formal authority system of the organization, and the primary work group. These may serve as stimuli that motivate subordinates to perform necessary tasks, or they may act as constraints on performance (House and Dessler, 1974, p. 31).

For example, if tasks are straight forward, task-oriented leadership behavior will be redundant and seen by subordinates as unnecessary. Supportive leader behavior, on the other hand, is less important when employees receive support from peers (House and Dessler, 1974, p. 33) However, supportive behavior does positively affect satisfaction and productivity when subordinates are working on stressful, frustrating tasks (Schriesheim and Schriesheim, 1980, pp. 349-71).

Tannenbaum and Schmidt (1973) identified environmental factors, which they called: 1) type of organization, 2) group effectiveness, 3) the problem itself, 4) the pressure of time. These forces combine to determine whether a manager pursues boss-centered behavior, which is the same as task-oriented behavior, or employee-centered behavior, which is the same as relationship-oriented behavior.

Organizational goals can also influence employee behavior, including the creation of goals. Cyert and March (1963) theorized that goals pursued by an organization result from coalition building among people and groups within that organization.

Perceptions

Perceptions represent how people interpret or view that which occurs around them (Catt and Miller, p. 55). Perception filter information that is trivial or which one declines to acknowledge. Perception also acts as a process of organization by categorizing, grouping, and filling in information in a systematic fashion (Griffin, 1987).

According to path-goal theory, subordinates' perceptions oftheir own ability differ. People who perceive that they are lacking in experience or ability may prefer task-oriented behavior to help them understand path-goal relationships better. Employees may resent task-oriented behavior, however, if they perceive their ability to be high.

Perceptions of environments may also influence how successful subordinates are at obtaining goals and being satisfied with their jobs. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976, pp. 71-73) studied two organizations that differed widely in perceptions of innovativeness. The two organizations were similar in other ways. However, employees at one agency perceived that its freedom to follow a course of action was limited by forces beyond their ability to manipulate. The other agency, in contrast, actively searched for resources from its environment. The authors concluded that the latter agency's greater degree of innovativeness was in part due to the perception of control it had over its environment.

Perceptions will also influence employee motivation. Employees are motivated by the importance and probability of achieving individual and group performance goals (Griffin and Moorhead, 1987). These goals can include ones that are easily measured, such as production output and profit, or they can be more abstract goals, such as quality of product.

While perception plays a role in all aspects of behavior, the assumption here is that the perception of goal success will affect job satisfaction. In other words, employees who believe their organization is achieving its goals and their needs will be more satisfied than those who believe their organization is not achieving those goals.

Market Factors

Situational approaches to management indicate there is no one best way to design organizations. Instead, organizations require different kinds of structures based on their environment and stage of development (Lawrence and Lorsch, 1967). Efforts to relate the environment to organization behavior have been developed (von Bertalanffy, 1956; Terreberry, 1968) and have been directed toward media organizations (Dimmick and Rothernbuhler, 1984). However, most of this research has dealt with the organization as the unit of analysis and has not tried to directly connect external factors with individual behavior within the organization.

Media economics research based on the industrial organization model (Busterna, 1988) comes closest to connecting external factors with managerial behavior by identifying market variables that affect actions of individual firms. Busterna (1980 and 1988) found that as competition among television stations increased the time allotted to news programming. Lacy and others (1989) found that as competition intensity increased, the newsroom budget sand staff increased.

Job Satisfaction Among Journalists

Although studies about job satisfaction in local television newsrooms are scarce, related studies have been conducted concerning job satisfaction among newspaper journalists and journalists in general.

A national study of job satisfaction among journalists (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986) found that age played a role in whether a respondent was satisfied. Among those under 40, esteem for the job the news organization was doing and frequent feedback from supervisors were the most important predictors of satisfaction. Among older journalists, many factors came into play, none of which seemed to dominate. The researchers, however, did emphasize that journalists who felt they had little autonomy would be more likely to leave the news organizations.

Similar results about autonomy can be found in a study of television journalists. Joseph (1983) concluded one reason work dissatisfaction existed with television reporters was that management made most decisions.

Leadership also plays a role. Adams and Fish (1987), in a study of television news directors, general managers, and sales managers, found that participative or democratic leadership behavior related to job satisfaction. However, their data were based on the managers' perceptions of their own behavior, rather than employees' perceptions.

In a preliminary examination of the data used in this study, Powers (1990) also found a relationship between relationship-oriented leader behavior and job satisfaction, when looking at employees' perceptions of their news managers' leader behavior.

Another important contributor to job satisfaction may be how likely employees feel they will be able to advance in their positions. Barrett (1984) suggested this is of particular importance to news managers who want to maintain high job satisfaction among women journalists. In addition to growth potential, Bergen and Weaver (1988) found that the best predictor of job satisfaction among 308 newspaper journalists was their perception of how well the paper was informing the public.

The structure of an organization can also play a role in job satisfaction. Johnstone (1976) found that in newspaper organizations, face-to-face communication declines as organizations increase in size. He also found that communication in large news organizations flows primarily down the organizational ladder.

Howard (1973) provided data on communication at group television operations. He found that large corporations encouraged the flow of communication and that extensive communication existed; however, much of it was written in the form of reports, memos, and newsletters.

Polansky and Hughes (1986) concluded that a newspaper's degree of centralization may be determined by its organizational structure. Furthermore, they found that an increase in centralization and bureaucratization fostered job dissatisfaction because of diminished autonomy.

While the background of individuals and the role of organizational structure and communication have been found to play a role in job satisfaction, little research has been done to connect environmental factors and ownership to satisfaction at local television newsrooms. This void exists in spite of research that indicates newspaper newsroom are influenced by the environment (Litman and Bridges, 1986; Lacy, 1987).

A Model of Job Satisfaction

A local television newsroom model that modifies the path-goal framework is presented in Figure 1. This model divides factors affecting job satisfaction into four groups: factors within the journalists (individual factors), leadership, organizational factors, and market factors. According to the model, these four types of factors influence the perception of goal accomplishment, which in turn affects the job satisfaction of the broadcast journalists. The three types of goal success perceptions included in the empirical test of this model are: profit success, news quality success and consideration success. Profit success perception was included because a profitable television station is necessary to produce quality programming. News quality success perception was included because journalists are interested in producing high quality newscasts. Consideration success perception was included because research indicates that employees are more satisfied when management is concerned about their well-being.

INSERT FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The assumed relationships among the three perceptions of success were that the perception of consideration success would affect the perception of quality success, and the perception of quality success would affect the perception of profit success. This order was based on the research that supports the importance of autonomy in job satisfaction. It was assumed that consideration behavior success would be correlated with feelings of autonomy because consideration behavior is a measure of democratic leadership. Quality success was assumed to precede profit success because literature about newspapers indicate that a quality news commodity will result in higher circulation (Stone, Stone and Trotter, 1981; Becker, Beam and Russial, 1978; and Lacy and Fico, 1989), which will result in long-term profitability.

While the model presented here is related to situational models of leadership that deal with job satisfaction, it differs in two ways. First, it includes market factors. Second, it places perceptions of goal success as an intervening variable between the situational factors and job satisfaction.

Hypotheses

Based on existing research and as a first step toward testing the validity of the model, the following hypotheses, based on the theory, were tested:

H1: Group ownership will be positively related to perceptions of profit success.

H2: As years with the company increase, perceptions of profit success will increase.

H3: As intensity of competition increases, perceptions of quality success will increase.

H4: As the number of households in a market increases, perceptions of quality and profit success will increase.

H5: As task behavior increases, perceptions of consideration success will increase.

H6: As relationship behavior by news director increases, perceptions of consideration success will increase.

H7: As perceptions of consideration success increases, perceptions of quality success will increase.

H8: As perceptions of quality success increase, perceptions of profit success will increase.

H9: As perceptions of consideration success increase, job satisfaction will increase.

H10: As perceptions of quality success increase, job satisfaction will increase.

H11: As perceptions of profit success increase, job satisfaction will increase.

The first six hypotheses deal with the impact of variables on perception. Hypothesis one represents a commonly held believe by journalists that group ownership is associated with a greater emphasis on profit (Kwitny, 1990). Hypothesis two represents the tendency of older employees to be more focused on economic goals (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986). Years with company was used because it had a slightly higher correlation with job satisfaction than did age (r=.19 for years with company and r=.15 for age). Hypothesis three reflects research that connects competition with financial commitment to the newsroom (Busterna, 1980 and 1988; Lacy, Atwater and Qin, 1989). Hypothesis four represents the connection between size of market, which reflects potential financial resources, and the amount of resources available to the newsroom (Lacy, Atwater and Qin, 1989). Hypothesis five and six reflect research about the role of leadership in affecting perceptions (Adams and Fish, 1987; Powers, 1990).

Hypothesis seven and eight concern the assumed relationships among the three types of goal success perceptions.

The last three hypotheses relate perceptions to job satisfaction. Little research exists that connects the perception of success at achieving three goals to job satisfaction, but research does indicate that goal achievement in general is related to job satisfaction at television stations (Powers, 1990) and that success at informing the public promotes job satisfaction at newspapers (Bergen and Weaver, 1988).

The model represented by the eleven hypotheses is underspecified because it does not include all of the variables that could fit within the five categories given in Figure 1. However, for methodological reasons, this study cannot be exhaustive of all possible variables. Rather, its purpose is to specify a general model and then to investigate variables that might explain job satisfaction.

Method

Questionnaires were mailed in the Summer of 1989 to anchors, television news reporters, producers, and assignment editors in the Midwest. The population contained network affiliates in the markets with at least three stations in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

One or two-station markets were excluded because they were more likely to have newsrooms that would exhibit monopoly or collusive oligopoly behavior. The sample was stratified by large and small markets. Large markets ranked in the 30 largest ADIs, which included 27 stations. Small markets were all others, which included 66 stations. Large markets were over-sampled to achieve relatively equal representation in the final sample.

A total of 43 news departments (22 small market stations and 21 large market stations) were included in the study. The names of 530 news employees were obtained through station visits, phone calls and follow-up letters. Eight names from each station were then randomly selected from the total population. Of 344 questionnaires, 171 were returned, representing a 50 percent response rate.

News staff members were questioned concerning their (1) age and experience, (2) news directors' management behavior, (3) level of job satisfaction, (4) perceptions of how successful their newsrooms were at achieving consideration-behavior, making a profit, and having quality newscasts.

The survey data were supplemented with data about ownership taken from the Cablecasting/Broadcasting Yearbook (1988) and about competition and market size taken from Arbitron ratings for February 1989.

The measure of competition was an intensity index based on head-to-head competition, which has been used for newspapers (Lacy, 1987 and 1990) and for local television news departments (Lacy, Atwater and Qin, 1989). The early evening share for a station was subtracted from the share of the market leader. If the station was the leader, its share was subtracted from that of the closest competitor. The absolute value was used to create a scale from zero to 100, with zero representing the most intense competition. Because the most intense competition had the lowest value, the scores were multiplied by a minus one before running the regression equations. This made the signs for the betas consistent with the hypothesized relationships. Interpretation of the beta weights was easier, and the results of the regressions were not changed.

Least-squares linear regression was used to test the hypotheses with a nonrecursive path model. Variables were retained in the model if they were statistically significant at the $p < .05$ level.

Before conducting the regression, the data were examined for violation of assumptions. Data for three of the variables were skewed, with values greater than 1.00. This indicated a potential for instability in regression coefficients (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983). The variables and their skewness values were years with the company, 1.55; intensity of competition, 1.5; and number of households in the market, 1.63. The natural logs of these three variables were used, which is a common method of dealing with non-normal data (Tabachnick and Fidell, 1983). After transformation, the skewness values ranged from +.5 to -.5, which was acceptable.

Results

The path analysis of the data is presented in Figure 2. Overall, five of the eleven hypotheses were supported by the path analysis. In addition, other relationships were found that have implications for local television newsroom management.

INSERT FIGURE 2 ABOUT HERE

All regressions were statistically significant at the $p < .001$. About 35 percent of the variance in the perception of consideration success was accounted for by the six environmental variables, of which four were statistically significant. Only 12 percent of the variance in perception of quality success was accounted for by the six environment variables and perception of consideration success. None of these variables were statistically significant as a predictor. Slightly less than 24 percent of the total variance in perception of profit success was related to the environmental variables and the other success perception variables. The only three variables significantly related to perception of profit success was group ownership, task behavior and perception of news quality success.

Finally, about 28 percent of the total variance in job satisfaction was explained by the path model. Perception of consideration success, relationship behavior and perception of quality success were the only statistically significant variables related to job satisfaction.

The first hypothesis predicted group ownership would be positively related with perceptions of profit success. The opposite relationship was discovered. The beta weight for ownership was -.22, which was uniquely associated with 2.4

percent of the variance in perception of profit success. Interestingly, task behavior had a -.23 beta with perception of profit success, and about 2.4 percent of the variance was uniquely associated with it.

Hypothesis two stated that years with the company would be positively related to perceptions of profit success. This relationship was not supported. Similarly, hypothesis three, which predicted a positive relationship between intensity of competition and perception of quality, was not supported.

The fourth hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between number of households in the market and perceptions of profit success. It was not supported.

The fifth hypothesis stated that increases in task behavior by managers would increase perceptions of consideration success. It was supported. The .20 beta weight for task behavior was uniquely associated with about 2 percent of variance in perception of consideration success.

Hypothesis six, which predicted a positive relationship between news director's relationship behavior and the perception of consideration success, was strongly supported. The .39 beta was the largest in the model, and it was uniquely associated with 7.3 percent of variance in the perception of consideration success.

Hypothesis seven was not supported. No relationship was found between perceptions of consideration success and perceptions of quality success.

The eighth hypothesis was supported by the path model. Perception of news quality success was positively associated with perception of profit success, with a beta of .36. Almost 11 percent of the total variance in perception of profit success was uniquely associated with perception of news quality success.

The ninth hypothesis was supported by the path model. The beta equaled .24 for the relationship between perception of consideration success and job satisfaction, but the variable was uniquely associated with less than 1 percent of variance in job satisfaction. This might be explained by the stronger direct relationship between news director's relationship behavior and job satisfaction. This relationship had a beta of .28, and uniquely accounted for about 3 percent of variance in job satisfaction.

The tenth hypothesis, which predicted a positive relationship between perception of quality success and job satisfaction, received support with a beta of .20. About 2.7 percent of variance in job satisfaction was uniquely related to perception of quality success.

The final hypothesis was not supported. No relationship was found between perception of profit success and job satisfaction.

Two other relationships were found that are worthy of note. First, a positive relationship was found between competition intensity and perception of consideration success. The latter was uniquely associated with 2.7 percent of the variance in the former. The number of households in the market was negatively related to the perception of consideration success, with about 2 percent of the variance in perception of consideration success being associated with the number of households.

Conclusions

This study demonstrated the complexity of predicting job satisfaction in newsrooms, which is consistent with research by Weaver and Wilhoit (1986). However, the model presented in Figure 1 generally was supported. First, market factors were related to at least one goal success perception measure. In fact, the individual factors category was the only group of variables in Figure 1 that did not have a relationship with job satisfaction. Second, two of the three perceptions of goal success were related to job satisfaction.

However, the lack of a relation between years with the company and other variables does not mean that individual factors do not matter in job satisfaction. First, years with the company reached the $p < .07$ level of significance in directly explaining job satisfaction. Second, other individual factors, such as experience and skill levels, may help explain perceptions of goal success and job satisfaction.

The positive connection between task behavior and perception of consideration success is interesting. It indicates that relationship and task behaviors may not be ends of the same continuum of management behavior. It also indicates that these local television journalists recognized and accepted variations in leadership behaviors. Sometimes a news director must make autocratic decisions. This behavior will not negatively affect the perception that the news director cares about her employees as long as she also shows adequate relationship behavior.

Of equal interest was the negative relationship between group ownership and profit success. Local television journalists at group owned stations do not necessarily perceive more success at making a profit than do those at independently owned stations. To a small degree, the opposite appears to be the case. Either the assumed over-emphasis on profit was not present at group-owned station, or the journalists did not perceive it.

The negative relationship between market size and perception of consideration success suggests that local television journalists in large newsrooms perceive less consideration success than do those in newsrooms located in smaller markets. Since size of organization is often associated with bureaucratic behavior and large markets result in large organizations, this should not be surprising. This finding is consistent with research by Johnstone (1976), Howard (1973) and Polansky and Hughes (1986).

An important relationship was confirmed between perception of quality success and perception of profit success. It suggests that local television journalists believe a quality newscast is a profitable newscast. It turn, this perception of quality success was related to job satisfaction. This type of relationship should be considered in reducing budgets in news departments.

Overall, the most important variable in this model for predicting job satisfaction among local television journalists was the relationship behavior of the news directors. This behavior had an indirect affect through perception of consideration success and a direct effect on satisfaction. This finding is consistent with results by Joseph (1983) and Adams and Fish (1987).

The implication of this research for local news directors is that employees will be more satisfied with democratic-oriented leadership than with leadership that is autocratic in nature. As mentioned above, this does not mean news directors cannot make heir own decisions, but rather that many, if not most, decisions should also include participation by the journalists.

While this study suggests some interesting relationships and possibilities for future study, it is limited. First, the path model includes only a few of the variables that might fit into the various types of factors. Second, the sample used here is limited to journalists from the Midwest. Additional studies using national samples and other variables could answer some of the questions raised here.

In summary, job satisfaction among local television journalists is related to many variables. These tend to fall into four groups: market factors, individual factors, organizational factors and leadership factors. These factors are in turn related to perceptions of success that affect satisfaction. The most important of these perceptions are success at consideration behavior by news directors and success at achieving high news quality.

References

Adams, R.C., and Fish, Marjorie J. "TV News Directors' Perceptions of Station Management Style." Journalism Quarterly 64 (Spring 1987):154.

Barnard, Chester I. The Functions of the Executive. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1964.

Barrett, Grace H. "Job Satisfaction Among Newspaperwomen." Journalism Quarterly 61 (Autumn 1984):593-599.

Becker, Lee; Beam, Randy; and Russial, John. "Correlates of Daily Newspaper Performance in New England." Journalism Quarterly 55 (Spring 1978):100-108.

Bergen, Lori A., and Weaver, David. "Job Satisfaction of Daily Newspaper Journalists and Organization Size." Newspaper Research Journal 9 (Winter, 1988) :1-13.

Busterna, John C. "Television Station Ownership Effects on Programming and Idea Diversity: Baseline Data. Journal of Media Economics 1 (Fall 1988):63-74.

Busterna, John C. "Ownership, CATV and Expenditures for Local Television News." Journalism Quarterly 57 (Summer 1980):287-291.

Catt, Stephen E., and Miller, Donald S. Supervisory Management and Communication. Richard D. Irwin, Inc.: Homewood, IL 1985, p. 55.

Cyert, Richard M., and March, James G. A Behavioral Theory of the Firm. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1963.

Dimmick, John, and Rothenbuhler, Eric. "The Theory of the Niche: Quantifying Competition Among Media Interest," Journal of Communication 34 (Winter 1984):103-19.

Dracos, Ted. "News Directors Are Lousy Managers." Washington Journalism Review, September 1989, pp. 39.

Duncan, W. Jack. Organizational Behavior. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1978, pp. 112-115.

Eastman, Susan Tyler; Head, Sydney W.; and Klein, Lewis. Broadcast/Cable Programming: Strategies and Practices. 2nd ed. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985.

Fleishman, E.A. "A Leader Behavior Description for Industry." In Leader Behavior: Its Description and Measurement, pp. 104-119. Edited by R.M. Stogdill and A.E. Coons. Columbus: Ohio State University, Bureau of Business Research, 1956.

French, Wendell L. Human Resources Management. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1968.

Gans, Herbert J. Deciding What's News: A Study of CBS Evening News, NBC Nightly News, Newsweek and Time. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Giles, Robert H. Newsroom Management: A Guide to Theory and Practice. Indianapolis: R.J. Berg and Company, Inc., 1987.

Griffin, Ricky W. Management. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987, pp. 490-492.

Griffin, Ricky W., and Moorhead, Gregory. Organizational Behavior. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1986.

Hersey, Paul, and Blanchard, Kenneth H. Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources. 3rd ed. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1972, p. 161.

House, R.J., and Dessler, G. "The Path-Goal Theory of Leadership: Some Post Hoc and A Priori Tests." In Contingency Approaches in Leadership, pp. 29-55. Edited by J. Hunt and L. Larson. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press.

Howard, Herbert H. "Multiple ownership in Television Broadcasting: Historical Development and Selected Cast Studies." Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1973.

Johnstone, John W. C. "Organizational Constraints on Newswork." Journalism Quarterly 53 (Spring 1976):5-13.

Joseph, Ted. "Television Reporters' and Managers' Preferences on Decision-Making." Journalism Quarterly 60 (Fall 1983):476-477.

Kwitny, Jonathan. "The High Cost of High Profits." Washington Journalism Review (June 1990):19-29.

Lacy, Stephen, Atwater, Tony, and Qin, Xinmin. "Competition and the Allocation for Local Television News." Journal of Media Economics 2 (Spring 1989):3-14.

Lacy, Stephen. "The Effects of Intracity Competition on Daily Newspaper Content." Journalism Quarterly 64 (Summer-Autumn 1987):281-90.

Lacy, Stephen, and Fico, Frederick. "Financial Commitment, Newspaper Quality and Circulation: Testing an Economic Model of Direct Newspaper Competition." Paper presented to the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication, Washington, D.C., August 1989.

Lawrence, Paul, and Lorsch, Jay. "Differentiation and Integration in Complex Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly* (June 1967):1-47.

Litman, Barry R., and Bridges, Janet. "An Economic Analysis of Daily Newspaper Performance." *Newspaper Research Journal* 7 (Spring 1986):9-26.

Polansky, Sharon H., and Hughes, Douglas W. "Managerial Innovations in Newspaper Organizations. *"Newspaper Research Journal* 8 (Spring, 1986):1-12.

Powers, Angela. "The Effect of Leadership Behavior on Job Satisfaction, Goal Agreement and Goal Attainment in Local Television News," Ph.D. dissertation, Michigan State University, 1990.

Rogers, Everett M., and Agarwala-Rogers, Rekha. *Communication in Organizations*. New York: Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1976, pp. 70-73.

Rue, Leslie W., and Byars, Lloyd L. *Management: Theory and Application*. 4th ed. Homewood. IL: Irwin, 1986.

Schriesheim, J.F., and Schriesheim, C.A. "Test of the Path-Goal Theory of Leadership and Some Suggested Directions for Future Research." *Personnel Psychology* (Summer 1980):349-71.

Stone, Gerald C.; Stone, Donna B.; and Trotter, Edgar P. "Newspaper Quality's Relation to Circulation." *Newspaper Research Journal* 2 (Spring 1981):16-24.

Tabachnick, Barbara G., and Fidell, Linda S. *Using Multivariate Statistics*. 1st ed. New York: Harper & Row, 1983.

Tannenbaum, Robert, and Schmidt, Warren. "How to Choose a Leadership Pattern," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1973):162-80.

Tausky, Curt. *Work Organizations*. Itaska, IL: Peacock, 1970.

Taylor, Frederick W. *Scientific Management*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1947.

Terreberry, Shirley. "The Evolution of Organizational Environments," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 12 (1968):590-613.

von Bertalanffy, Ludwig. "General Systems Theory," *General Systems* 1 (1956):1-10.

Warren, James. "Unwritten Words: Layoffs, Bottom-Line, Now Part of Media's Vocabulary," *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1991, Sec. 4, p.4

Weaver, David H., and Wilhoit, G. Cleveland. The American Journalist. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1986.

West, Donald. V., ed. Broadcasting/Cablecasting Yearbook, 1986. Washington, D.C: Broadcasting Publications, Inc., 1987.

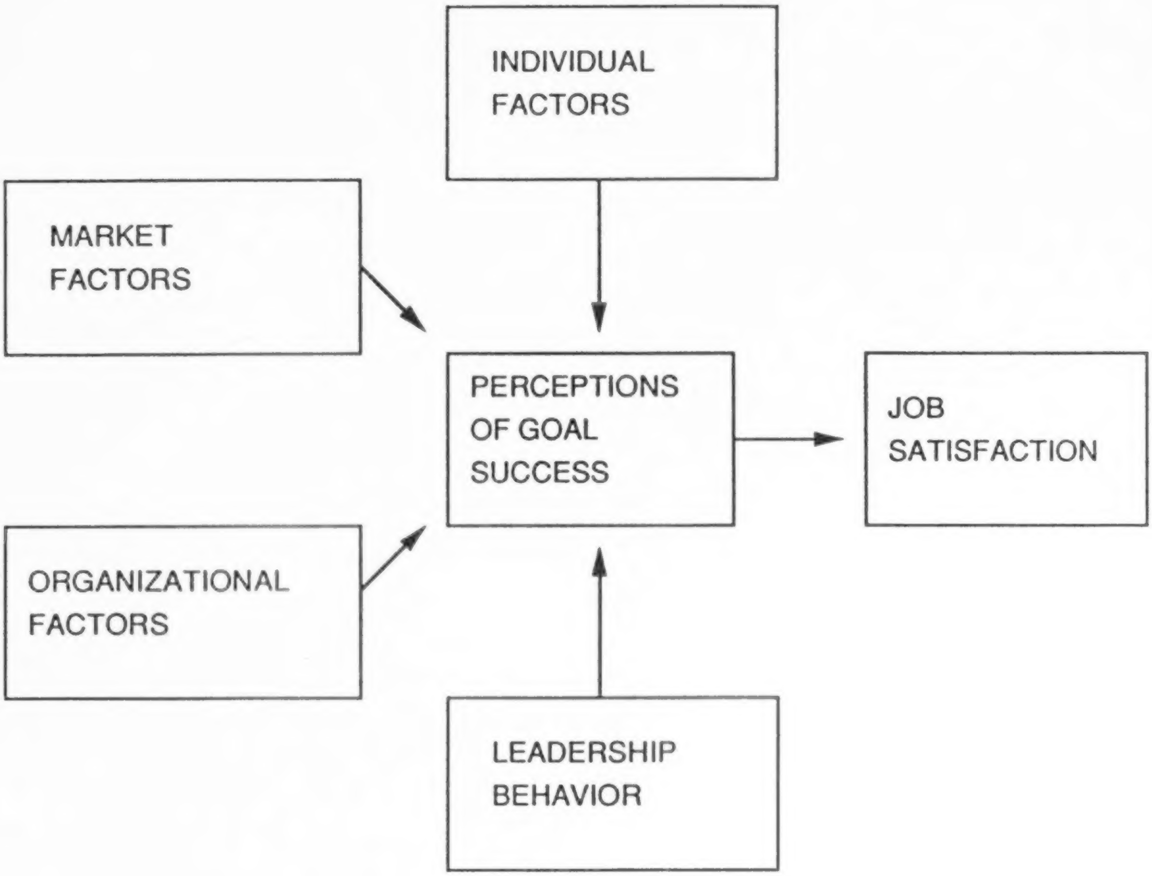
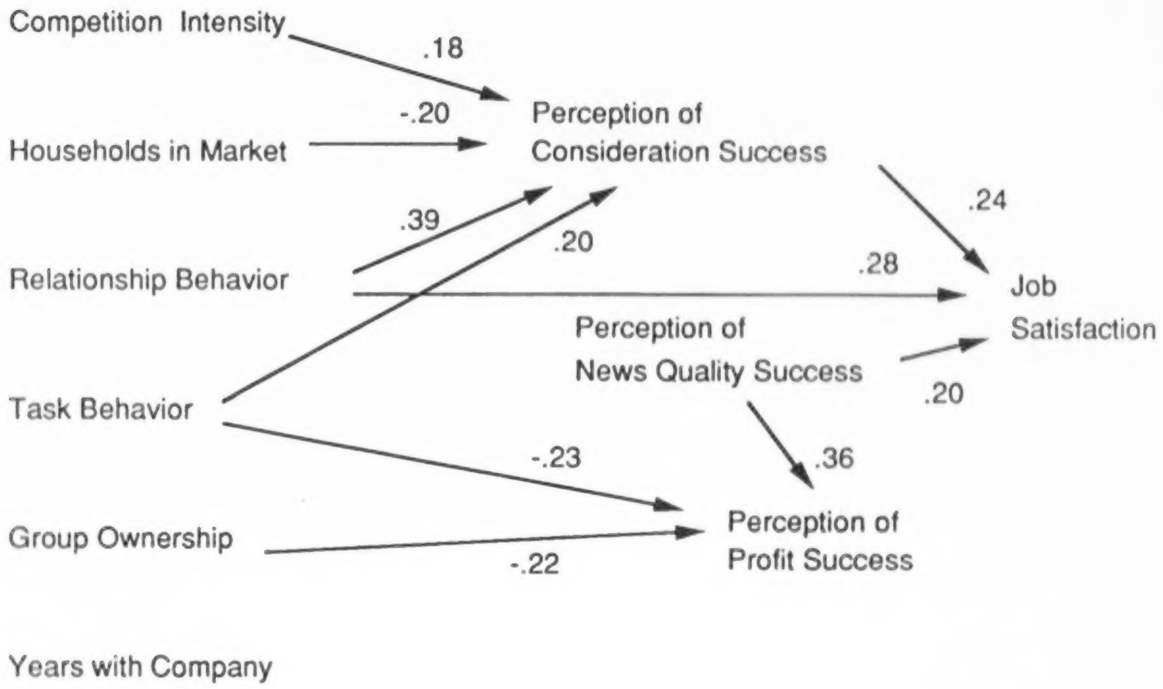

INDIVIDUAL FACTORS
MARKET FACTORS
PERCEPTIONS OF GOAL SUCCESS
JOB SATISFACTION
ORGANIZATIONAL FACTORS
LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOR

Figure 1: Model of Job Satisfaction for Local Television News Departments



Competition Intensity
.18
-.20
Households in Market
Perception of
Consideration Success
.24
.39
.20
Relationship Behavior
.28
Job
Satisfaction
Perception of
News Quality Success
.20
Task Behavior
-.23
.36
Group Ownership
Perception of
Profit Success
-.22
Years with Company

Figure 2: Path Analysis for Factors Affecting
Job Satisfaction in Local TV
News Departments